

# JAMAICA JOHNNY



BERTA AND ELMER HADER



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# JAMAICA JOHNNY

by Berta and Elmer Hader



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By BERTA and ELMER HADER

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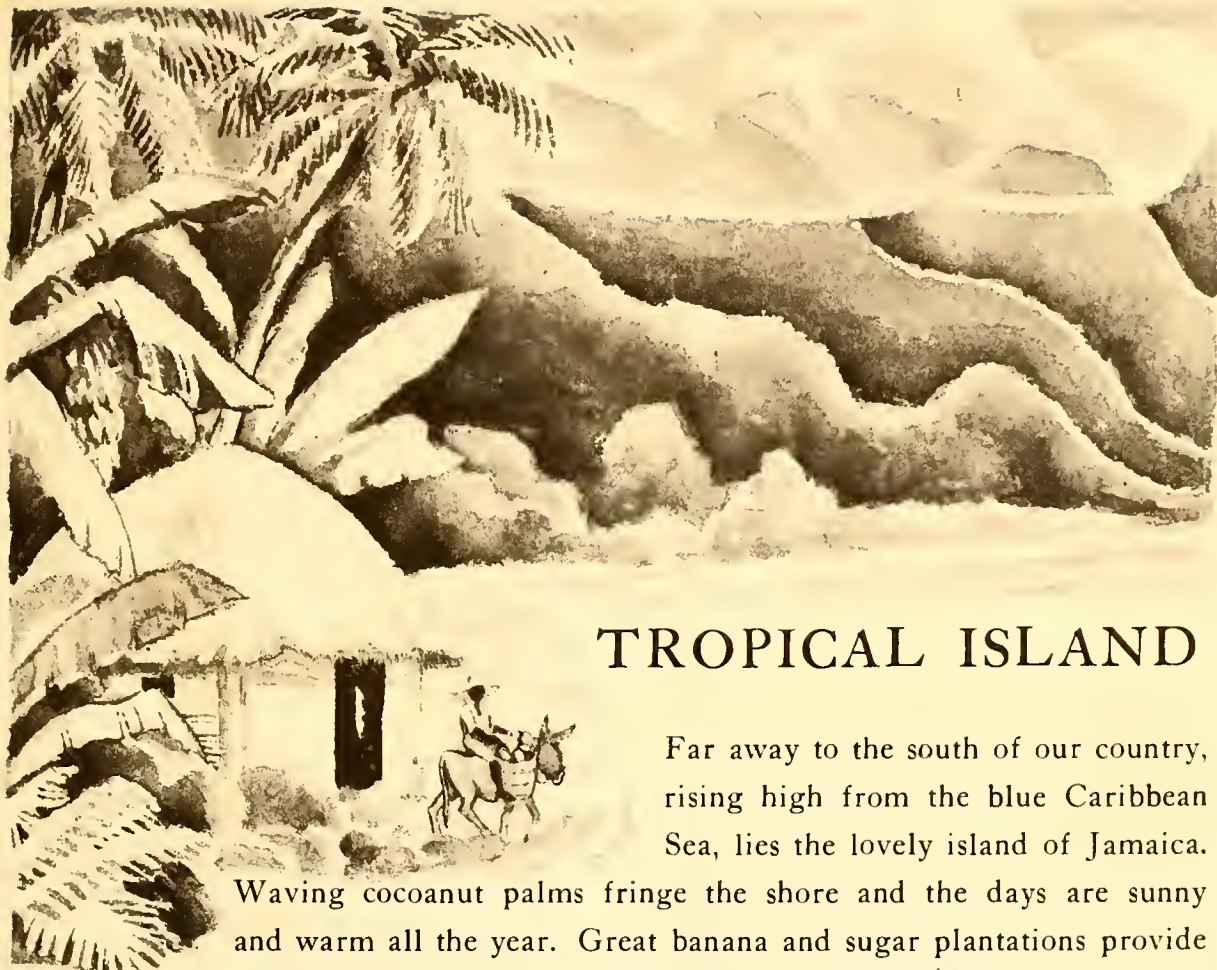
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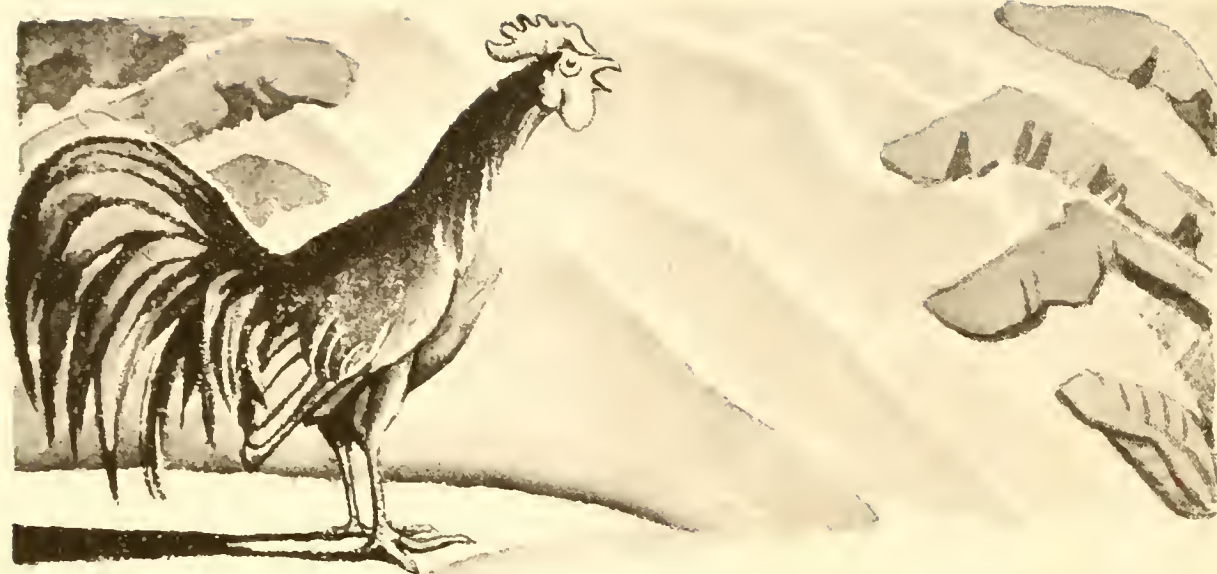


## TROPICAL ISLAND

Far away to the south of our country, rising high from the blue Caribbean Sea, lies the lovely island of Jamaica.

Waving cocoanut palms fringe the shore and the days are sunny and warm all the year. Great banana and sugar plantations provide work for the people who live on the island. Steamers call regularly at the busy ports to take on loads of bananas, sugar and spice for far-distant lands.

As our boat glides into the harbor the cocks crow. A faint rosy blush appears in the sky and the cloud-topped mountains rise from the blue sea. Welcome to Jamaica!



## Chapter I

### THE LITTLE MOUNTAINEER

**C**“Cock-a-doodle-doooo.” A small black cock threw back his head and raised his voice in a joyous welcome to the sun. He ruffled his feathers, scratched a few times in the dusty clearing and crowed again. An answering call came from across the ravine. Even as the cock crowed, the sun’s rays slid over the crest of Blue Mountain. Coward’s Ridge, Yallah Hill and Sugar Loaf seemed to rise and take their places for the day. Their duty was to shelter the fertile valley and the peaceful city at their feet. The sun rose higher and fleecy clouds rested on the mountains. Great black vultures circled high in the sky or flapped clumsily just above the tree tops, looking for food.

The little black rooster cocked his head on one side and surveyed the scene from his yard near the top of the hill. "Cock-a-doodle-doooo," he crowed again. From near and far came answering calls. Satisfied that the island of Jamaica was awake, the little cock joined the three hens and scratched up the soil under the banana palm, searching for a nice fat grub.

At the last call of the cock, Johnny Morgan opened his eyes and yawned a very wide yawn. The open doorway of the room in which he was lying was bright with the morning light. He yawned again and sat up on the hard bench that was his bed. Then, hardly awake, he hurried outside to feel the warmth of the sun. The nights were cool up in the mountains and Johnny had only one thin blanket to cover him.

Johnny Morgan was a happy little boy with a ready smile for everyone. Ever since his own family had died of the fever in the little house down by the seaside, he had lived with his uncle, Solomon O'Connor, on a little farm high up on the mountain. Uncle Solomon often reminded him that his father's ancestors served the great Henry Morgan and that his mother was one of the O'Connors of St. Ann's.

"You must hold your head high, Johnny. Your mother had grand plans for you," he would say.

Like most of the people on the mountain, they were poor. Two ragged shirts and a pair of faded blue trousers were all the clothing Johnny possessed. They were worn but clean. It was easy to wash one shirt while he wore the other, but when he washed his one pair of trousers he had to sit in the barnyard with the goat and the black pig until they were dry. He wished that he had a suit with coat and pants like some of the city boys wore. He would only wear them on market days. Up in the mountains he didn't need many clothes.

When Johnny was only five, his uncle taught him to sweep the yard and to feed



the chickens and the pig and to carry a can of water, balanced on his head, all the way from the spring to the house. Now he could care for the young banana plants and he had a small garden of his own where he raised yams, corn, kale and a row of radishes and some cucumber vines. Johnny also learned how to prepare their simple meals and to make the boiled bread his uncle liked. Uncle Solomon worked, once in a while, on the big company plantation nearby. He knew all about growing bananas, and was the most expert banana cutter on the mountainside.

But he did believe in giving plenty of time to rest. Right now he was sleeping peacefully in the thatched cottage. He took life easily and, after all, life was simple up there in the hills, where bananas, breadfruit, yams and mangoes grew magically in the rich soil. He opened one eye and watched the shadows from the cocoanut palm, then closed it again for more of that important rest.

Johnny knew that Uncle Solomon would not get up for another hour. He reached up and took a ripe banana from the bunch that hung under the eaves of the house. Then he looked around the yard for the sunniest spot.

"Move over, Biddy," he said to the little white dog that occupied most of the sandstone ledge near the path. Biddy moved over and wagged her tail in welcome. Johnny sat down, and took a bite of the banana. Biddy watched him eagerly. "You want some, too?" asked Johnny. "Sit up and I'll give you a bite. Sit up, Biddy." Biddy sat up on her hind legs and her bright black eyes gazed intently at the banana. Johnny broke off a piece and gave it to her. "That's a good dog, Biddy," he said, patting her gently. Biddy watched hopefully until all the banana had disappeared. Then she settled down again to sleep in the sun.

Now that the day was well started Johnny went out to see his pets. At the edge of the clearing he whistled softly, two short notes followed by a long note a little

lower. He repeated the call, waited a moment, then whistled it again. A pair of parakeets flew out from their hiding place and perched on a small bush within a few feet of Johnny's head. They cocked their heads first on one side and then on the other, until Johnny pulled some seeds from his pocket and fed his feathered pets.

Leaving the parakeets cracking their seeds, Johnny dug his toes into the steep hillside, balanced himself, and with a few jumps was in the level space that served as a barnyard for the little farm. The small burro brayed a welcome from the shed and the black rooster stared at Johnny as he entered the yard. "Cluck-cluck," he said in a questioning tone. Three hens stopped their scratching under the cashaw tree and hastened over, looking up at Johnny expectantly and clucking loudly. Johnny gave them all the seeds that were left in his pocket.

The yard was separated from the road by a rail fence covered with vines. A little sour sop tree guarded the entrance. At the far end of the yard, just under the star apple tree, was a small thatched shed which sheltered the little white burro Coco, Katy the goat, and Barney the pig. From the shed a path led down to the garden and wound back to the cottage below. The banana palms and the breadfruit tree threw long shadows across the yard.

Johnny looked into the basket in which he kept his pet lizards. The brown one ran up his outstretched arm and waited for a tidbit. The deep blue lizard and the bright green one remained motionless until Johnny whistled softly. Then they too ran up his fingers and waited with the brown lizard. Johnny took them all to a sunny spot in the yard to feed on insects that were flying around a piece of ripe pawpaw.

Johnny took the gourd which hung by a string on the breadfruit tree. "Come out here, Katy," he called. A little brown and white goat looked out from the shade

of the thatched shed. "Baa," she bleated. "Move around," said Johnny. He shoved Katy into the open where he could milk her. When the gourd was full of warm milk he hung it in the shade. Later he would take it over to Mr. Strudwick for his little girl. Katy wandered slowly back into the shade.

Of all his pets Johnny liked the little white burro best. Uncle Solomon had bought him when he was only four months old, and Johnny had raised him. Coco was a great help when they started for market. Whether he carried heavily laden baskets or great stems of bananas, he plodded patiently along. When Uncle Solomon was working on the banana plantation, Johnny loaded the pack baskets with grapefruit and yams and star apples and went to market with Mrs. Brown. If the load was not too heavy, little Caroline Brown rode with Johnny.

"Come on, Coco," Johnny said as he flapped the flanks of the little white burro. As Coco got to his feet he almost stepped on a lean black pig. The pig grunted in protest and scrambled between Johnny's legs as he hurried out of the shed. "Nobody hurt you, Barney?" said Johnny, and he threw a small green banana to the pig.

Johnny rubbed Coco's nose and the little burro put back his ears and rubbed his head against Johnny's shoulder in affectionate greeting. "We have to take some grapefruit to Gideon Wethersby, Coco," said Johnny. "He is going to give us some calabash gourds." Johnny wanted the gourds to make rattles to sell on market day.

Johnny tied a rope halter around Coco's neck. He took a woven pack basket from the floor in the corner of the shed and threw it across Coco's back. Then he led him to the grapefruit tree near the road and tied him to it. Coco switched his tail and dozed. With a straw bag in one hand, Johnny climbed up into the lower branches of the grapefruit tree. He quickly filled the bag and climbed down, emptied the fruit into the basket, and climbed up the tree again. He did this several



times, until he had enough fruit to fill the two baskets.

It was time, now, to be getting on. He must hurry, for Uncle Solomon would be up and getting ready to start work on the house. Johnny untied the lead rope. "Come along, Coco," he said as he hurried out of the yard. Coco followed slowly. A large truck swung around the curve and thundered down the road toward them. Johnny shoved his burro to one side. Coco nosed around in the grass that grew alongside the road. Just as the truck passed Johnny and the burro it back-fired. Bang! Bang! The pistol-like report startled Johnny and completely upset Coco's usually calm nature. Johnny felt the rope snapped from his hand. The next instant the burro was galloping madly up the road.

"Whoa!" shouted Johnny. Coco had never acted like this before. Running and shouting Johnny followed the runaway burro. The grapefruit bounced out of the saddle baskets and rolled in every direction. Johnny saw that he could not catch the burro unless he could head him off. The road up the mountain zigzagged back and forth. Johnny darted off the road and up a steep bank to the roadway twenty feet above. Breathless from the climb he waited for the runaway. Coco was getting tired. Running up hill on a hot day was hard work. He had slowed down to a trot by the time he came around the turn. He did not look surprised to see Johnny there before him and submitted to capture without a struggle.

Johnny led Coco meekly down the mountain road. He collected all the grapefruit he could find. They stopped at the washing pool and had a drink from the trickling stream that fell into the hollow in the rocks. The women of the mountainside would be washing clothes here later in the day, but now it was clear and clean. Johnny and his burro enjoyed a short rest in the shade.

Starting once again along the path that led to Gideon Wethersby's little farm,

they soon came to a clearing in the woods. In the center of the clearing was a neat cottage with a tin roof. Johnny called to a long thin man who was sleeping under a mango tree, "Hello, Mr. Wethersby!" The sleeper sat up with a start. Like Uncle Solomon, Mr. Wethersby believed in sleeping whenever he could.

"Oh, it's you, Johnny," he said. "What do you want?"

Johnny reminded him of the bargain they had made. "Yes, yes. I have the gourds in the house." Johnny quickly emptied the grapefruit out of the baskets and filled them with gourds. Then he said goodbye to Mr. Wethersby and hurried on, for it was getting late and he must start cooking the first meal of the day. Uncle Solomon would be hungry and he was too.

"All right, Coco," he said. "We'll have to hurry. Come along." But nothing could make the little burro hurry and they walked slowly down the hill. The sun rose higher. Johnny liked the warmth of the sun, especially in February when the nights were cool and a heavy mist sometimes drifted in through the gap and settled on the mountainside.

"Hey, Boswell?" shouted Johnny.

A boy about his own age looked up from the doorway of a little thatched cottage near the road. "What do you want?" He looked questioningly at Johnny.

"Uncle Solomon is starting his new house today. He wants your father to help."

"I know," said Boswell and he waved his hand and went into the cottage.

Ahead of Johnny walked a fat woman balancing a huge basket on her head.

"Mornin', Aunt Minnie," he said.

Aunt Minnie swung around to see who had spoken to her. "Good morning, Johnny," she said, and her white teeth flashed in a wide smile. "Going to market? How is your uncle?"

"No, I'm not going to market now. Uncle Solomon is starting a new house today and I am helping him," Johnny called out as he turned into his own yard.

Aunt Minnie waved her hand in farewell as she waddled down the road.

Johnny took the baskets off the burro's back and carried them into the house. Uncle Solomon was nowhere to be seen. Johnny called him but there was no answer. Johnny took the gourds from the basket and cut a small hole in the end of each gourd to let in air to dry the inside. Then he hung them on the wall beside his other gourds. This done he hurried out again. He started a fire in the outdoor fireplace back of the house. He filled a gourd from the stream and put a pot of water on to heat. Uncle Solomon liked to have dumplings cooked with his yams and breadfruit. There was Uncle Solomon now, coming down the road talking to Boswell's father about the plans for his new house.

Johnny put the chunks of breadfruit and yams into the boiling water. Then he put the dumpling cakes on a board near the fire. Satisfied that he hadn't forgotten anything, Johnny went over to sit on the sandstone ledge near the path. Biddy jumped up beside him and pressed her nose against his arm affectionately. He drew his knees up under his chin and clasped his hands in front of his ankles. The warm sun felt good on his back. He looked down over the dense jungle growth that covered the mountainsides to the great banana plantations below. In the distance he could see the buildings of the city and, beyond the city, the blue waters of the Caribbean stretching endlessly.

Johnny scanned the horizon. His eyes brightened as he saw far out on the blue water a large steamer headed for the narrow entrance to the harbor. Soon it would be moving slowly up to the dock to discharge passengers and cargo. Johnny was particularly interested in the passengers. Some of them might drive up the mountain

to see the view of the harbor.

These visits were often profitable to Johnny as his house was perched on the steep banks of the ravine near a wide place in the road and tourists often stopped there to admire the view. Sometimes they took photographs and if they included Johnny in the picture they gave him a sixpence or even a shilling. Sometimes he could tell them where to go on the mountain road, or answer questions, and then they gave him pennies. He could show them the carved gourd rattles Uncle Solomon had taught him to make and perhaps they would buy them for souvenirs.

Uncle Solomon had forbidden Johnny to beg as many of the other children did. "No O'Connor ever begs," he said sternly. "No one respects a beggar."

Johnny recalled the happy days when he had played on the sand with his little sister Martha and they had learned to swim and to dive for bright pebbles underneath the water. But he had lived in the bush country so long now that it seemed the only home he had ever known.

Johnny did not go to school nor did many of the mountain children. Sometimes the truant officers came over the hills and rounded them up, for the government schools. But regular lessons did not appeal to these mountain people and their visits to school were few and far between. Johnny was far too busy with his animals and his carving to miss school, and his uncle was too busy with farm tasks and sleeping to bother about his nephew's reading and writing.

Johnny still watched the ship. After all it wouldn't dock for an hour or two yet, and it would be a long time before any of the people would be ready to drive up the mountain. He looked up at the huge banana palm which blotted out great patches of the sky. The new stem of bananas was getting larger and the hands fuller. Uncle Solomon would cut it soon and put it on the sturdy back of the little

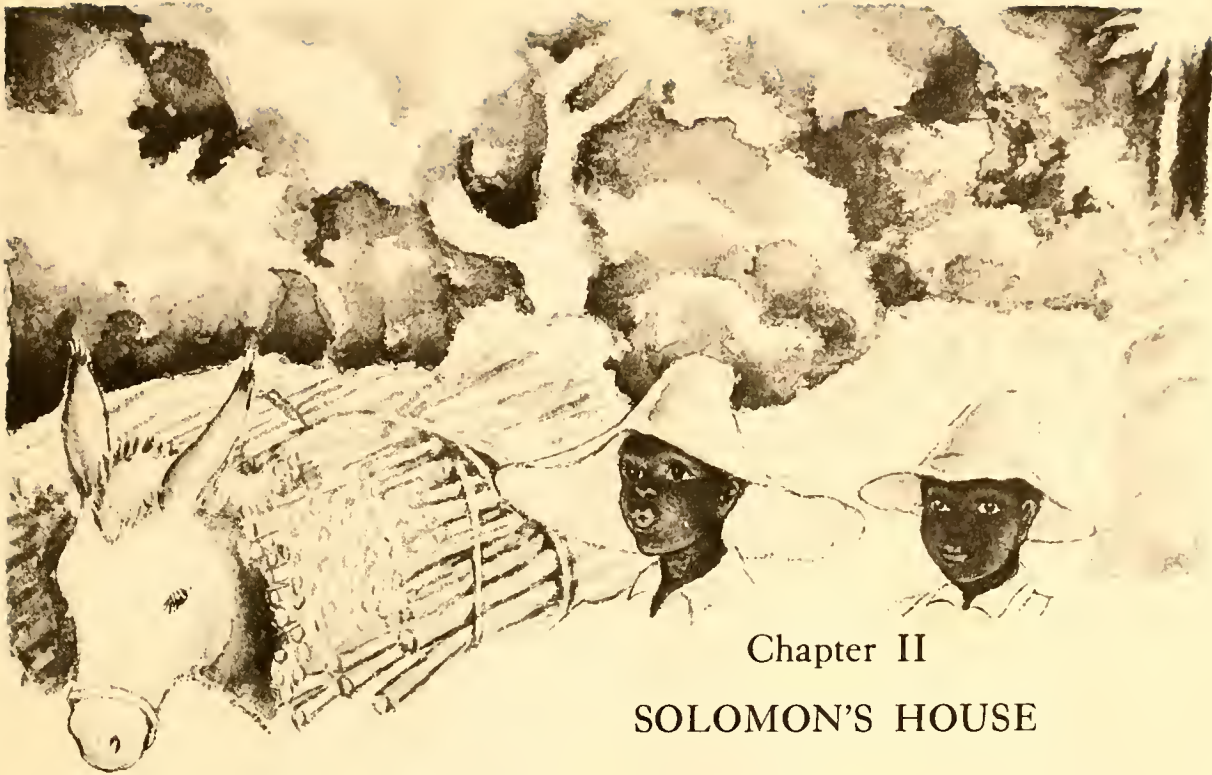


white burro and take it to market to sell.

Market day was always an adventure for Johnny. He liked the excitement of the market place with all the people crowding and bargaining. If he had some rattles or carved gourds on hand he took them along too. Miss Ponciana Wethersby sold baskets and jippi-jappa hats but she was always glad to put a few of Johnny's carved gourds in stock. She was sure to sell them, for his carving was very good. He liked doing it and put a great deal of thought and care into his work.

Johnny got up to look at the gourds hanging on the walls of his house. Two of them ought to be dry enough to carve. He took them off the peg. They were about the size of large oranges. He tested the shells with a finger nail and found them just right for carving. In a few more days they would be too hard, so he sat right down on the little bench under the grapefruit tree to carve. On one of the gourds he traced the outline of a little house with the point of his knife blade. He drew a banana palm on one side of the house and a cocoanut palm on the other. Satisfied with the design, Johnny started cutting. He pressed the blade deeper into the shell and cut away the dark outer covering, being careful not to let the knife slip. Slowly the little house took shape. For the walls of the house and the clouds in the sky, he cut away large patches of the dark outer covering of the gourd. He carved patiently for some time. Johnny liked to carve and there was always a chance that he might sell the gourds.

When he had finished carving, Johnny fitted round sticks into the openings cut in the ends of the gourds. He was careful not to let the seeds fall out. When they were dry they would make very good rattles. Johnny put the gourds on the bench beside him and leaned back against the grapefruit tree. He closed his eyes for just a minute and was soon fast asleep.



## Chapter II

### SOLOMON'S HOUSE

"Wake up, Johnny." These words and a nudge in the ribs made Johnny sit up and take notice. His friend Boswell and Barney the pig stood in front of him. Boswell held the uneaten half of a banana in one hand and scratched his woolly head with the other. The little black pig kept his eye on the banana. Boswell spoke between mouthfuls of the sweet fruit. "Better hurry, Johnny. Pappy and Uncle Solomon are hungry. If you want anything to eat you'll have to hurry." Boswell gave the last bite of banana to the pig.

Johnny and Boswell ran over to the fire. Boswell's father and Uncle Solomon had finished eating. They sat in the shade, their backs against the pink wall of

Johnny's house. A short nap after the midday meal was absolutely necessary according to Uncle Solomon. Only crazy folks worked in the broiling sun. Johnny put the two remaining pieces of dough into the boiling water. They cooked quickly. By the time he had finished the yam and breadfruit, the dumplings would be ready to eat. Boswell had had his dinner at home, but he didn't need much coaxing to try some of Johnny's food. When the two boys had finished their meal they gave the scraps that remained in the pot to Biddy, who had been watching them hopefully.

"We've got to hurry," said Johnny. "Uncle Solomon doesn't think we brought enough sticks for the walls."

The two boys hastily cleared up the litter and scraped the glowing coals under the pot in which a chicken was cooking. Johnny felt badly when Uncle Solomon killed one of the black hens to cook for the house-building feast, but Uncle Solomon said it was the custom and would prevent disaster from falling on the house. Johnny took the cutting knives from the wall of the cottage. The boys climbed up the steep bank to the sunny yard. It was quicker than the path. Only the old folks used the path.

Johnny untied the little burro and started out of the yard. Suddenly he stopped. He held up his hand. Boswell listened too. A faint honking of a horn signaled the approach of a car. Was it a truck or a car carrying visitors? They would go to Lookout Point and see what was coming. Johnny ran back to the house and took the gourds he had finished carving from their place on the wall.

The two boys and the burro walked slowly up the dirt road. Biddy followed at their heels. Humming birds flew over their heads and darted in and out of the many blossoms all about them.

"Uncle Solomon knows a man who trained a humming bird to sip honey from a flower held in his lips," said Johnny. "It takes a lot of time though. Whatever happened to your pet buzzard? I haven't seen him around?"

Boswell shook his head sadly. He had found the little buzzard with a broken leg and had brought him home and cared for him. When the leg mended the buzzard followed him around like a dog.

"He got too big and he got a craving for meat," said Boswell. "One day pappy caught him eating the chicken we saved for our dinner. I heard him say, 'Just for that, you go away from here.' I don't know where he went but the next day he was gone. I have never seen him since."

Johnny and Boswell stopped where the road widened. The honking of the approaching car was louder. They caught a fleeting glimpse of the occupants as it passed along the road below. There were two women and a man. Johnny got his gourds ready, and Boswell hastily made a nosegay from some lilies growing by the roadside. None too soon, for with a loud honking of the horn, a long gray car swung around the turn.

The driver slowed down as he drew near the boys. Then he pulled off the road and stopped. "Oh, yes, ma'am," he said to the passengers. "This is a very beautiful view." He opened the door of the car.

The ladies and the man got out. Johnny and Boswell looked at them curiously. Their faces, fiery red from the tropical sun, fascinated the two little natives. They stared at the man who wore a piece of white paper to shield his nose from the sun. It made him look very funny. Johnny and Boswell laughed.

"Hold it," shouted the man pointing the camera at them. The smiles faded from the faces of the boys. What did he mean by "hold it"? Hold what?

"Come on boys, smile." The man in the brown suit pointed his camera at two very sober faces. They stared unblinkingly at the little black box pointed at them. Johnny had had his picture taken before but he hadn't realized it. Old Mrs. Rorrie had said the tourists made black magic with the little boxes they carried around and pointed at people.

"Well, if you won't smile I'll have to take you as you are." Johnny and Boswell heard a clicking sound. The tourists got back into the car. The starting of the motor brought the boys into action and they ran to the car. Boswell offered his lilies to the ladies and Johnny showed them his gourds. The ladies were interested and took them from his hands.

"Just a minute, Edwards," said the gentleman.

"What nice carving!" one of the ladies exclaimed.

"How interesting!" said the other. "These are much nicer than any we looked at in the city. Ask him how much they are, Edwards."

"He speaks English, ma'am," said Edwards. "He understands everything you say. Speak up, boy. How much are the gourds?"

Sensing a sale Boswell quickly answered for Johnny. "The little ones are a shilling," indicating the small ones. "Those," he pointed to the ones held by the lady in the blue dress, "are one and six. No one carves as pretty as Johnny." Boswell spoke very rapidly.

"What did he say, Edwards?" asked the man in the front seat. "I didn't understand a word."

"It is hard to understand at first," said Edwards, "for he speaks so fast and it sounds so strange. But it *is* English. He says the small ones are twenty-five cents and the larger ones are about forty cents."



"This is my house," said Johnny, recovering from his shyness and pointing to the carving on a gourd held in his hand. "This is my pig, my trees, my uncle." He pointed to each carving as he spoke.

"Why, he is an artist," said the lady in brown. "These carvings are excellent."

When the car drove on Johnny was richer by a crisp dollar bill and a silver shilling. The lady pinned the lilies on her coat and gave Boswell a three-penny piece. Johnny felt very happy. He was rich. In a burst of generosity he gave the silver piece to Boswell. He pulled a little grass purse from his pocket and put the carefully folded bill in it. "Well, now we'll go get the wood," said Johnny.

He was so happy he didn't notice that the road was hot, and his spirits were so light he felt as though he were walking on air. A loud honking warned him to move to one side. Another car of visitors passed and Boswell ran after it shouting loudly for pennies. Johnny never told Boswell not to run after the cars and beg. It might be all right for him to beg. He wasn't an O'Connor.

The boys came to a small clearing in the jungle. "Here we are," said Johnny. "You cut over by the Tamarind and I will cut here." Johnny tied the burro to a small cotton tree. Both the boys knew how to handle knives. Boswell cut with a hooked blade. Johnny used a long straight knife. Their strokes were swift and sure. While they worked Biddy ran through the woods following the scent of a mongoose. In an hour they had some fine big bundles of sticks.

"That's enough," said Johnny. "It's almost more than Coco can carry." After the boys had tied up the sticks and fastened them firmly on the burro's back, Johnny whistled for Biddy and they all started home.

When they arrived home, the framework for the new house was up. Uncle Solomon had driven stout poles into the ground and tied cross poles to them to

support the roof. While the boys shaped the sticks to make the wattled walls of the house, Uncle Solomon and Boswell's father put in the door frames. The front door faced the setting sun. On the opposite wall, facing the rising sun, they placed the back door. They put a small window in both of the side walls.

The next day was a busy one. The sticks the boys had cut were woven into the wall spaces left between the poles that supported the roof and the door frames. When the walls were finished, the house looked like a giant basket. Then Uncle Solomon was needed to cut bananas on the plantation.

He was away for several days and during the time no work was done on the house. Johnny weeded the garden and fed the animals. He carved his gourds and he played with Boswell and Caroline. The days passed quickly but when night came Johnny missed Uncle Solomon. He fell asleep with his head against Coco's warm neck and Biddy curled up at his feet.

Johnny was very happy when Uncle Solomon came home bringing him a bright new knife. When they began work on the house again, Uncle Solomon decided to plaster it both inside and out and Johnny helped him mix a plaster of red earth and wood ashes. Then they went to the palm grove at the bottom of the mountain and Uncle Solomon selected the best of the dry palm leaves for the thatched roof. Uncle Solomon was very particular that everything should be just right. Coco did his part in the building now and carried great bundles of palm thatch up the mountain road. Starting at the bottom of the roof they tied layer after layer of the palm leaves to the roof poles with long tough grass. When the roof was finished Uncle Solomon whitewashed the walls with lime made from the soft limestone he dug out of a nearby bank.

When they at last finished their work everyone agreed that it was a very fine

cottage. Then it was that Uncle Solomon let the secret out. He told Johnny that he was to be married the coming full moon. Johnny's new aunt was to be a girl from Don Cristofer's Cove near St. Ann's Bay. Her name was Millicent Mullens.

The following week Uncle Solomon brought his bride to the new cottage on the mountainside. Johnny liked his aunt Millicent from the moment he saw her. She was dressed in city clothes when she arrived. Johnny thought she looked beautiful, but he felt more at home with her when she put aside her best clothes and put on a simple dress with a big apron and tied a gay plaid cloth around her head.

Aunt Millicent took the motherless boy to her heart from the first day. She loved Johnny and tried to make life easy for him. Now that she took over the simple chores of the house Johnny had more time to play with Boswell and Caroline and the other children who lived nearby. He made a flower garden for Aunt Milly in a sunny corner of the yard. He got seeds from a neighbor who had a fine garden at the foot of the mountain and planted a row of marigolds and some poppies and forget-me-nots. At the edge of the garden he planted mint and thyme, that Boswell's mother gave him. Carrots, corn, beans, squash and a few pumpkin vines grew in Uncle Solomon's garden. Watercress grew down by the little stream and the steep bank was planted with fruits and nuts. Cocoanut palms waved over bananas, mangoes, pawpaws, tangerines, cashew nuts and guavas. Food was plentiful.

Johnny now found more time to carve his gourds. Some of the large ones he cut in half for bowls. He had many ideas and no two designs were exactly alike. He carved the things he saw about him. Most people liked the little thatched houses. Sometimes he carved alligators or birds or flowers. When he carved banana palms he often dreamed of the day when he might have a banana plantation all his own. That was the ambition of every small boy in Jamaica.



### Chapter III

## THE TRUANT

“Hey, boy! Why aren’t you in school?”

Johnny looked up. Eagle-eyed Mr. Smalley, the truant officer, fixed him with a stare. Johnny wanted to run but the cold eyes of the big man held him fast.

“You are old enough to be in school. Why aren’t you there?” Mr. Smalley bent over to look at the carving in Johnny’s hand.

“Wasting your time whittling with a knife when you could be learning to read and write.” Mr. Smalley scowled fiercely at the small boy in front of him.

Johnny tried hard to think of an excuse, but there wasn’t a case of measles or fever on the mountains! He might plead poverty. No, that wouldn’t do either. Aunt Milly was working at this very minute down at the bend of the road. All the women of the district put in many hours breaking rock for use on the road. Each

rock pile counted for so much toward the taxes on their tiny farms. The women didn't seem to mind the hard work. They straddled a pile of stones in a shady spot and broke the larger stones into small bits. They joked and laughed as they pounded with their small hammers. Johnny knew that Aunt Milly would willingly work a little harder to pay the extra school tax. Aunt Milly worked hard enough! Besides, he didn't want to go to school!

"I'm on my way to the school now," interrupted the voice of Mr. Smalley. "Put your gourds away and come along with me."

He was so commanding Johnny dared not disobey. Meekly he put his gourds away and walked along beside Mr. Smalley.

Not one of Johnny's playmates was to be seen as they started up the mountain road. A goat lifted her head and stared as they passed. Francine Martine usually sat swinging her long legs in the guano tree at this time of day, but now the tree was empty. There wasn't a sign of life about the tin-roofed cottages. Johnny thought he saw Reggie Whittlesby skip across the road just below. If so, he must have disappeared into thin air. Mr. Smalley stopped and looked suspiciously about the yard, when they came to the Whittlesby cottage. No one was in sight. Even Rags the dog slept on undisturbed. He never opened an eye or moved a whisker. The appearance of Mr. Smalley on the scene didn't concern him.

They walked on. The mountainside seemed abandoned by everyone but Johnny. Many of the men were working in the fields below or loading bananas on the big boat. In some mysterious way, when the officer had appeared all the children on the mountain vanished. Johnny sighed. He glanced at Mr. Smalley. The truant officer, with his prize in tow, walked steadily on. His eyes, never still for a moment, searched the ravines and clumps of bushes for the slightest movement

that would betray a hiding child.

What good ever came of going to school? Johnny wondered as he followed his captor. Uncle Solomon had taught him to plant and care for bananas. When he was grown up he could work on one of the big plantations down on the plains. He might have to know reading and writing if he lived in the city. The rich people who lived there sent their children to fine schools, for their children had to learn to take care of shops and estates which they would own some day.

Johnny loved his little farm on the mountainside. He had his pets and his garden. Uncle Solomon and Aunt Milly were good to him and the neighbors were kind and friendly. They shared the products of their little farms. In the evenings they often sang and danced to the accompaniment of a home-made banjo or a guitar and drum. On Sundays they went to church and listened to Mr. Pocock talk with a great waving of arms about sin and the devil. Life on the mountain was just right for Johnny. Schools were for the children who lived in the city, he thought.

A cuff on the side of the head brought him back to reality. "Why don't you pay attention when I talk to you? Here I've been telling you what an education can do for a boy and you haven't heard a word," Mr. Smalley grumbled. Johnny marched gloomily and silently along. His spirits sunk lower and lower as they drew near the one-room school.

The school building was badly in need of repairs. Shingles were missing from the roof and the walls needed painting. The room was empty. Mr. Smalley was perplexed, but Johnny was relieved. Then they heard voices. Miss Forkins, the teacher, had taken the class outdoors for the morning lesson. She stopped talking as Mr. Smalley and Johnny turned the corner of the building. About thirty pairs of eyes stared at Johnny. He stared back. He didn't see anyone he knew.

"Good morning, Miss Forkins. I have a new scholar for you. Johnny Morgan is his name. He lives over Irish Town way. I knew he lived there but this morning is the first time I ever laid eyes on a child on that hill. I'll surprise the rest of those children over there sometime. I must be on my way. Good morning." Mr. Smalley bowed low and strode away with all the dignity he could muster.

Miss Forkins looked at Johnny over her spectacles. "A big boy like you should be ashamed of himself for staying away from school. You should have been here a year ago. Stand over there with the others and don't let me hear you whispering." She took her place in front of the blackboard which leaned against the side of the building, and continued with the spelling lesson. She didn't like interruptions. She was a nervous little woman and she had worn herself to the bone in her earnest efforts to educate the mountain children.

Johnny was depressed. He looked all around. No one was paying any attention to him. All eyes were glued to the board. The corner of the building was only a foot away and he edged toward it. No one noticed his quiet exit from the class. He slipped around the corner of the schoolhouse and reached the road in less time than it takes to tell. He ran quickly along the road until he decided he was safe from pursuit. The farther away he went from the school, the higher his spirits rose. He was beginning to feel very safe when, just ahead of him, walking slowly up the road, he saw Mr. Smalley. Johnny made a dash for the bushes at the side of the road. Mr. Smalley turned suddenly, as though he remembered something very important, and went quickly down the road again. Johnny stayed under cover until he was certain Mr. Smalley was well around the turn. Then he crept out and ran.

Reggie Whittlesby and Francine Martine were playing in the yard. He warned them of the return of Mr. Smalley. Reggie's eyes opened wide at sight of Johnny.

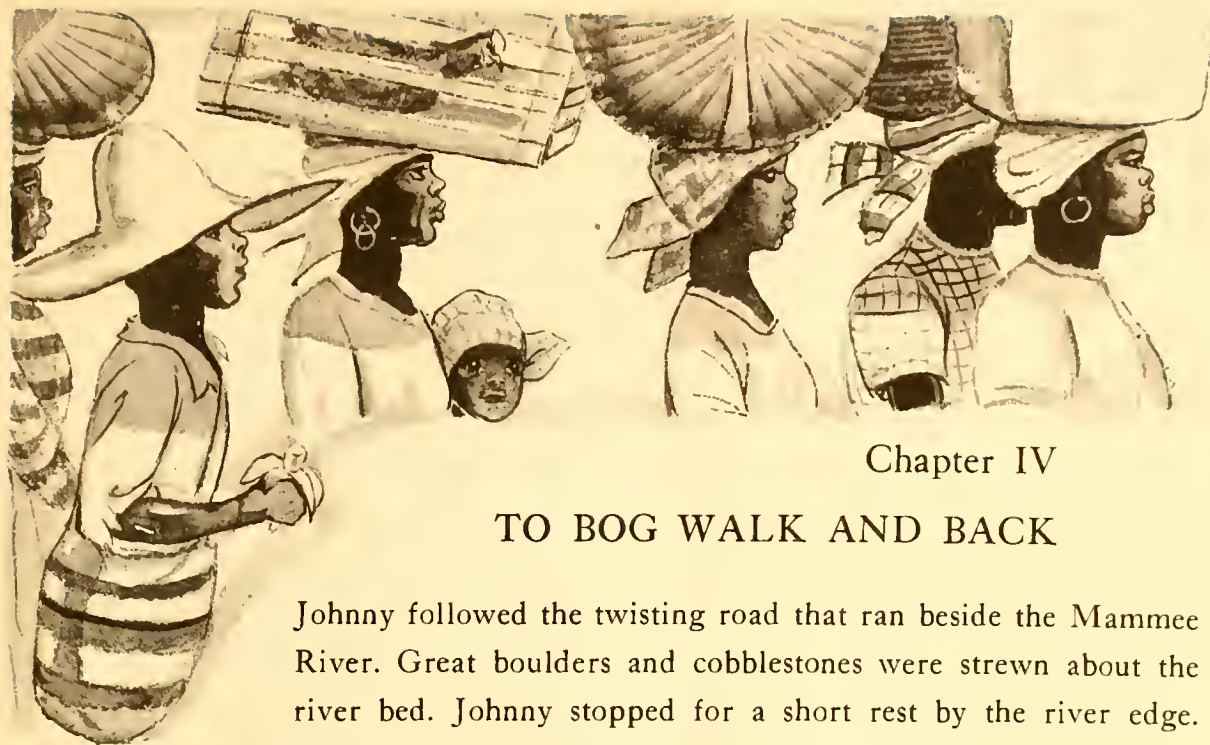


"How . . . What . . ." His questions tumbled over one another in his haste to find out how Johnny, whom he had seen marching up the road a prisoner, had escaped and was now standing before him as free as a bird. He took to his heels the minute Johnny told him that Mr. Smalley might be expected back at any moment.

Johnny had to think of a plan quickly, too, for the officer would certainly be back after him. He decided to go and visit his Aunt Caroline, who lived with her three children, Dorothy, Marjory and Patricia on a small farm way up at the upper end of Bog Walk. If he started right away he could reach his aunt's farm before night, that is, if he had good luck and got a ride on a truck going out that way. He ran to tell Boswell of his plan and to ask him to feed his pets and tell Aunt Milly and Uncle Solomon where he had gone.

He hurried out to the barn yard and scattered some seeds for the little black rooster and the hens. He gathered some leaves and green bananas for Coco and Barney and Katy the little goat. He gave two cooked yams to Biddy. "Now you all be good until I get back," he said as he rubbed Coco's soft nose. He patted Biddy gently on her head and said, "You take care of everything, Biddy." Biddy wagged her tail and licked his hand with her little wet tongue. Johnny put a few ripe bananas and several tangerines in a gay striped bag which he hung over his shoulder and started off. Biddy ran after him. "You go home, Biddy. Go home!" said Johnny firmly. Biddy's tail drooped sadly. She stood in the little yard and watched Johnny go down the road.

Light-hearted and carefree Johnny set out for Bog Walk.



## Chapter IV

### TO BOG WALK AND BACK

Johnny followed the twisting road that ran beside the Mammee River. Great boulders and cobblestones were strewn about the river bed. Johnny stopped for a short rest by the river edge.

He tossed some bright pebbles into the water and watched the ripples spread wider and wider and then disappear. He met very few people on the mountain road. The traders usually started for the market very early in the morning. Some went the night before, staying in the penny shelter, to be ready for the earliest buyers. Johnny forgot the truant officer, the school and Miss Forkins. He whistled happily as he walked along.

When he came to the main highway he met an unending procession of men, women and children going to and from the market. Carts drawn by horses, mules and donkeys passed slowly by. Some were heavily loaded with sugar cane, or long bunches of green bananas. Others carried garden produce. Sometimes two, some-







times three people rode on the creaking, groaning carts. Tall women and short women, some in gay-colored kerchiefs and dresses, others in plain white walked single file along the roadside. Many of the travelers balanced great trays piled high with vegetables on their heads. Others balanced baskets filled with grapefruit and mangoes, baskets of limes and avocados, of oranges, tangerines and pawpaws. Small burros plodded slowly along almost hidden under burdens of sugar cane or gourds. Many burros carried villagers on their backs, others patiently followed their owners. Men, too, passed by in the procession. One carried a great load of baskets strung on a pole over his shoulder. Trucks and automobiles whizzed by at an alarming speed. Johnny never failed to "shoo" the goats and pigs off the highway whenever he heard the approaching roar of a truck.

"Good morning, Mrs. Edwards," Johnny called to a large woman traveling in the opposite direction.

Mrs. Edwards halted her small burro. "Hello, Johnny, where are you going?" she asked.

"I am going to visit Aunt Caroline. Please, Mrs. Edwards, tell Aunt Milly where I am." Johnny wasn't too sure of Boswell's memory.

Mrs. Edwards flashed a gleaming smile. "Wish you safe travel," she said. With a wave of her hand she turned up the road that led to the mountain.

Johnny joined the procession. At Mathilda's Corner he hesitated. Usually he took the road to the left and went into the market place. In the city there was always a chance to pick up a ride, but the road to Halfway Tree was shorter. A produce truck stopped beside him. Three men got off. "If you are going to Halfway Tree, hop on, boy," said the driver. Johnny was up in a minute and they were off. Little thatched cottages and cactus fences flashed rapidly by. Johnny

felt dizzy watching them. They rumbled past rows and rows of high banana palms. Johnny looked with interest at the white cattle in the pens. He liked animals, and he hoped that he could get a job looking after cattle when he was older.

The truck slowed down near a giant cotton tree. A dozen men and boys lounged about the foot of the tree. They looked very small leaning against the roots. Most of them had gourds for sale. A few had strings of tangerines or oranges. They waited patiently for the visitors who always came to see the great tree.

At Spanish Town the truck drew up under a seagrape tree in the public square. "Here's where I stop, boy," said the driver.

Johnny looked up at the driver and smiled, "Thanks for the ride," he said and jumped to the ground.

Johnny liked Spanish Town. He liked to walk around the cathedral. One day he had listened as a guide told a party of visitors that some of the rulers of Jamaica had been buried in the church more than three hundred years ago.

The midday sun beat down fiercely on the dry yellow ground. In spite of the heat there was a crowd in the market place. For a while Johnny watched the women in their bright-colored dresses and gay kerchiefs, bargaining in the stalls. He admired the plaid kerchiefs so much that he took the dollar from his purse and bought a square of checkered cloth for Aunt Caroline. He bought a string of red beads for each of the little girls, then he started again for Bog Walk. Just outside the town he sat down beside the road and ate his lunch of bananas and oranges. Much refreshed he set out again.

There were many people on the road returning from the day's market. Some of them carried their purchases on their heads. Others rode tiny donkeys or sat on the floor of two-wheeled donkey carts. Johnny liked this road to Aunt Caroline's.

Sometimes it led to one side of the bright green river, then on to the other. It twisted and turned like most of the island roads. The people had to keep a sharp lookout for trucks and automobiles. At the sound of the warning horn, they stepped off the road. The carts pulled as far over to the side as possible.

Johnny stopped and stared at the towering walls of limestone that rose straight up from the river. Not a sign of earth anywhere, yet tall trees grew out of the cliff and maidenhair ferns fringed the river edge. It certainly would be fun to climb those trees. Johnny's thoughts were interrupted by a shriek of warning.

"Look out, boy," a woman screamed and Johnny jumped to the side of the road. The onrushing car swerved. Johnny saw the frightened and angry face of the driver for a fleeting moment. Then the car vanished around another turn.

"Catch 'em. Catch 'em," a voice shouted shrilly. On the opposite side of the road an old woman waved her arms wildly. A chicken crate, with one side open, lay on the ground beside her. Johnny had noticed a hen in that crate balanced on her head just a few minutes before. Frightened by the car she had dropped the crate and it burst open. The red hen was now running wildly up the road.

Johnny joined the men and women trying to catch the frightened hen. It darted to one side and then to the other. Hands missed it by inches. Between the legs of a wandering burro, under the wheels of a slow-moving cart, the hen ducked. Johnny caught hold of her by the tail as she came out from under a team of oxen, but she slipped from his grasp and flew cackling up the road. The chase ended as suddenly as it began. Another car raced down the road. The red hen flew up into the air and was hit by the fender of the car. The driver did not stop.

Johnny picked up the hen. He felt very sorry for the old woman. He knew how badly he would have felt if this had happened to one of his hens. The old



woman wept and wailed long and loud, and the passers-by tried to console her. Johnny looked at the hen in his arms. He felt so sorry for the old woman he decided to give her what was left of his dollar, so she could buy another hen. He handed her the two silver shillings. Her tears stopped and she heaped praises on Johnny. He hurried away feeling very happy. He was really glad to be able to help the old woman—besides, his aunt could cook this nice fat hen for dinner.

The sun had long since disappeared over the high mountains and Bog Walk was in deep shadow. After the sun set night came quickly for there was no dusk in that country. As Johnny entered the gate of Aunt Caroline's farm the sky was bright with stars. Cho-cho, Aunt Caroline's dog, barked noisily until he recognized Johnny. Then he wagged his tail in welcome. Aunt Caroline came around the corner of the cottage followed by his cousins, Pat and Margie. Dorothy was watching the cooking pot.

"Why, bless my soul, if it isn't Johnny! Talk of angels and you hear their wings. Come along, honey. You're just in time for dinner." Aunt Caroline led Johnny into the house. "You're growing to look more and more like your father every day." Then Aunt Caroline saw the chicken. "Where did you get that hen?"

Suddenly, without the slightest warning, the hen in Johnny's arms kicked out and he almost dropped her as she struggled to get loose. The car had only stunned her and now she was struggling to get away. She flapped her wings in Johnny's face. Johnny had to hold fast to her legs.

Johnny told them about his adventure on the road. "I thought I bought a dead hen for you, but she sure is lively enough now. You better hold her tight." His aunt took the hen. Then he gave her the kerchief he bought for her at the market and to each of the little girls he gave a string of bright red beads.

They were delighted with the gifts. The little girls stood up beside Johnny. They measured his height with their own to see if he had grown since his last visit.

"Sit down by the fire, Johnny. Pat and Marge, you go and pull some scallions," directed Aunt Caroline. There was much rushing about as everyone prepared for the meal. Aunt Caroline wanted to hear all the news of St. Andrew's. "I find it hard to get away from this little farm since your Uncle Seymour answered the call to hoe the corn in the garden of the Lord." Johnny told her all the news he could think of. The announcement of Uncle Solomon's marriage pleased her very much. "It's about time he found someone to look after you, Johnny. That's fine. You need a mother. And that reminds me of something very important——"

"Everything's ready, Ma," sang out Dorothy from her post beside the pot. The hot food tasted good to Johnny, for his long trip had given him a fine appetite. After dinner Aunt Caroline disappeared into the cottage and came back again with a small package.

"Your mother gave me this package to give to you when you were old enough to read. You're almost nine now, and I know you're about the smartest boy in the whole school."

Johnny took the package. He held it tightly in his hand. He felt a little ashamed now when he heard his aunt mention school. He did remember a laughing mother long ago. Would she have wanted him to go to school? The package he held in his hand was like a message from her. He unwrapped it, Aunt Caroline and the girls crowding around him. They were as excited as Johnny.

"A book," said Dorothy.

"A book," echoed Marge.

"Read it," urged Pat.

Johnny looked at the tiny book in his hands. He turned the pages. There were pictures in it. This was a present from his mother but he couldn't read a word of it.

"What does it say?" insisted his cousins. For the first time in his life Johnny wished he could read. He shook his head sadly and wrapped the book up again carefully in the bit of paper.

"Time to go to bed, children," said Aunt Caroline. "Johnny will show you the book again tomorrow."

The little family was astir bright and early. The warm rays of the sun tipped the tops of the tall bamboo thicket with gold. A brook passed through Aunt Caroline's farm. A few large boulders made a dam for a small pool. Laughing and shouting, the little girls ran down the path and splashed in the water. At the sound of their voices Johnny woke up. He remembered the little book which he had hidden in the thatched roof over his head. His mother's gift had made a great difference in his feeling about school. Perhaps it would be a good idea to know how to read and write. He wanted to know what the little book said and what all the pictures were about. He got up and went outside.

The three little girls came racing up the hill to greet him.

"Get your washing together, children," called Aunt Caroline. "Margie, put on your pink dress and give me the one you have on. Johnny, I guess you better let me wash your clothes. They need a good scrubbing."

Johnny hesitated. His shirt and trousers were soiled from the journey but he had nothing else to wear. Before he could protest, Aunt Caroline had an idea.

"Dorothy, get one of your dresses for Johnny."

The idea amused them all very much but there was nothing to do but wear it.

Johnny slipped the yellow dress over his head. He was glad that Boswell and Reggie weren't there to see him now.

Aunt Caroline went away with the bundle of washing. Soon they could hear her singing a merry song as she pounded the clothes clean in the brook close by.

"Want to see our rabbits?" asked Patsy.

Johnny hadn't any rabbits of his own. He would have liked one for a pet. He followed the girls through the bamboo to a small pen made from pieces of board and flattened oil cans. An empty box turned on its side made a fine home for the rabbits. A big white mother rabbit and six little ones occupied one half the pen. In the other half a big gray and white rabbit nibbled at a cabbage leaf.

Johnny looked at the rabbits. They were so soft and round. He bent over and touched one. It hopped quickly away.

"Do you want to hold one?" asked Marge. She seized a little bunny by the ears and dropped him into Johnny's arms. With a powerful kick the baby rabbit hopped to the ground, and away he went through the garden. The four children followed him shouting loudly. The rabbit ran toward the house. Cho-cho got up to see what all the noise was about. He yawned and stretched. Then he saw the rabbit—but it was too late. The little bunny had dashed right between his legs and scampered under the house. Cho-cho was as excited as the children over the hunt. He barked loudly and followed the rabbit. Dorothy caught him by the end of his disappearing tail and hauled him out from under the house. Humiliated by such treatment Cho-cho gave up the chase and went back to his favorite spot under the guano tree. He pretended to be asleep but he had his eye open just enough to watch the place where the rabbit had disappeared.

The four children held council as to what to do next. Johnny felt foolish in



Dorothy's dress. Now if he only had his pants on he would crawl under the house and catch the bunny in short order.

But Patsy solved the problem. "I'll get him," she said, and she lay down flat and squirmed under the floor of the house. "I see him," came her muffled tones followed by, "Come here! . . . I got him." From under the house a hand came out, firmly holding a kicking little bunny by the ears.

Marjorie grabbed its legs. "I've got him!" she shouted to Patsy. With a couple of loud grunts Patsy emerged. Just then Aunt Caroline came up the path.

She stopped short in amazement. "What have you been up to? That was a clean dress you had. Take it off and go wash yourself in the pool this minute."

Patsy meekly obeyed. The little rabbit was returned to the pen.

When Patsy came back from her bath, she took Johnny to see her bat. "He hangs high over my bed," she told him as she led the way. Johnny looked at the sleeping bat. It wasn't much bigger than a mouse. He wasn't much impressed. He had seen hundreds of larger bats fly out of a cave near his home.

Johnny was glad when the hot sun had dried his clothes. He put them on in a hurry. He didn't like wearing the dress. After the midday meal they all took a nap. Johnny fell asleep thinking about his little book.

"Come on, Johnny, we're going fishing. Here's your line."

Johnny woke with a start. In front of him stood Marge with a fishing pole in her hand. Johnny scrambled to his feet with a happy smile. He loved to fish. The other little girls were waiting by the gate. The children hurried along the road and climbed down the bank to the edge of the river. Johnny jumped to a big flat rock a few feet from the shore. He baited his line with a small grasshopper. Then he let his line out slowly. The grasshopper, floating on the rippling water, carried

the line into a pool. There was a flash of silver and the grasshopper disappeared.

The fish was hooked. Johnny pulled his line in carefully, took the mullet off the hook and tossed the fish to Patsy on shore. Dorothy and Marge took turns with their line, fishing from another rock in the stream. Patsy decided to join Johnny. As she jumped to the rock she landed with a splash in the shallow water. It was not cold and she knew her clothes would soon dry in the sun. She laughed as loudly as the others at her mishap. She dammed up a small pool to put the fish in.

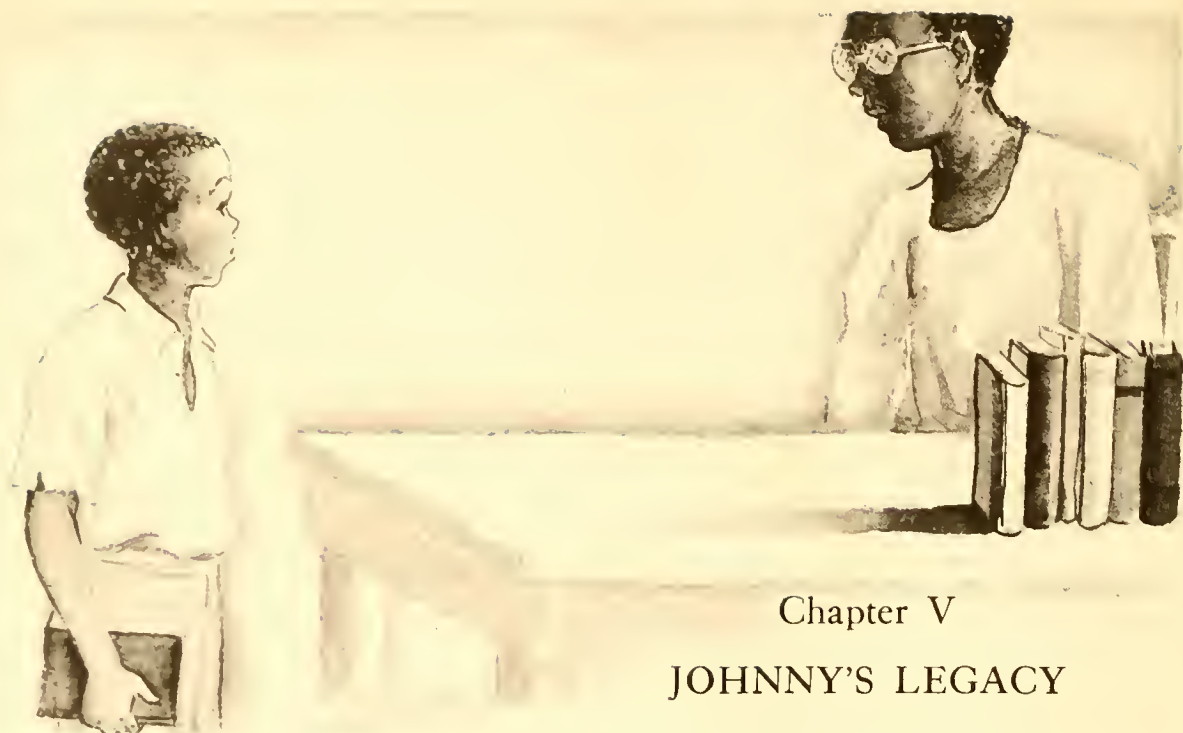
They fished until the mullet refused to bite anymore. When they brought the fish home Aunt Caroline was delighted. "We'll fry them for dinner," she said.

Johnny stayed on a few days longer. Then early one morning he suddenly decided to go home. Aunt Caroline put some bananas and a piece of dried fish into his basket. The precious book was tucked safely in the bottom. He had to walk to Spanish Town but from there a good-natured truckman gave him a lift. He reached home before dark. Biddy barked a joyous greeting. Aunt Milly welcomed him. She had missed her little boy and his ready smile. Uncle Solomon was attending a church meeting. Johnny told Aunt Milly all about his visit. He brought out his little book proudly and showed her the pictures in it.

"I wish I knew what that book says," sighed Johnny.

Aunt Milly couldn't help him, for she couldn't read either.

Johnny put the little book on the shelf with his gourds, and went out to see his pets. The burro, the goat and the pig answered when he called. The chickens had gone to roost. So had the parakeets. Johnny was tired, so he went to bed too.



## Chapter V

### JOHNNY'S LEGACY

When Jonny got up at dawn the next morning, the little black rooster had already started the chorus of cock crows echoing in the mountain ravines. Coco the burro greeted Johnny's appearance with a loud "Hee-haw." He trotted across the yard and rubbed his little muzzle against Johnny's hand. He, too, had missed his young master. Uncle Solomon and Aunt Milly were kind to him, but they often forgot the little treats that a burro looks forward to. Coco stared at Johnny with his great black eyes. He shook his head and held his great ears straight up in the air. Could Johnny have forgotten too? Johnny held out a stalk of sweet sugar cane.

Barney the pig came out from under the shed. His grunts said quite plainly,

"I like bananas. Give me a banana." Johnny fed Barney a green banana. Johnny like green bananas, too, but he always boiled them before he ate them.

"Play dead and I'll give you a treat," said Johnny to Biddy. He pointed to the ground with one hand. Biddy's mouth watered when she saw the piece of dried fish held high in Johnny's other hand. She bent her legs and let her body touch the ground.

"Play dead!" said Johnny. Biddy rolled over on her side. She lay still. "Fish!" shouted Johnny. The little dog jumped to her feet. Johnny held the piece of fish while Biddy chewed off each bite with great relish.

Then Johnny took down the gourd and milked Katy the goat. Uncle Solomon and Aunt Milly were still asleep. Johnny weeded the garden for awhile. Then he selected a pair of gourds and carried them to his sunny seat near the road. As usual Biddy occupied the whole bench. Biddy never moved without being told to "shove over." Johnny sat down and worked busily for awhile at his carving.

He watched the length of the shadows to keep track of the time. No one in the bush had a clock. Johnny had important plans for the day. Soon he put away his gourds, put a few ripe bananas in his basket and started up the road. He saw Aunt Milly standing in the doorway and he waved his hand to her.

"I won't be home until late," he called out. "I'm going to school."

Aunt Milly looked puzzled. "My goodness! What's come over that boy!" she exclaimed.

Biddy followed Johnny to the turn in the road. That was as far as she was permitted to go. There Johnny ordered her to go home. Johnny rounded the turn and continued on up the mountain. He was the first pupil at school. Miss Forkins was surprised, but she was in a pleasant mood and returned Johnny's shy

greeting and smile with a warm "Good morning, Johnny Morgan."

The first day at school was a hard one for Johnny. He made friends with the other pupils quickly, but as for learning to read and write he felt quite discouraged. He thought he would never learn his A-B-C's. Neither Aunt Milly nor Uncle Solomon could help him but they encouraged him to go to school. Johnny wouldn't give up. He was determined to learn to read, and he paid close attention to everything Miss Forkins said.

Slowly he learned the alphabet. Johnny astonished his teacher by his eagerness to learn. He came to school early and stayed late. Every day after school he took the little red book from its hiding place up under the eaves of the cottage. Picking out the letters of the alphabet as he learned them was very hard work but Johnny was patient. When he could read some of the words his delight knew no bounds. Little by little he mastered the longer words and finally, with Miss Forkin's help, he could read the book from cover to cover.

One day Johnny and Boswell sat by the roadside. Johnny had his carved gourds. Boswell had two bunches of ripe bananas. They hoped some customers would come along.

"Boswell," he said suddenly, "you ought to come to school with me."

"Why?" asked Boswell in some surprise. Johnny used to say that school was a waste of time and he had agreed.

"Well," said Johnny, "if you go to school and learn to read and write you can become a great man, a governor. You might even be a king. The book my mother gave me is about a boy like us who became a king."

Boswell laughed. "You can't fool me. You never read that book."

Johnny drew the small red book from his pocket.

"I can too." He opened it up to the first page. "You just listen."

Then he began. "*The Story of Tommy, a Little Black Boy of Jamaica.* That's the name of the book, Boswell. You listen and I'll read the whole story."

He glanced up and down the road to see if any customers were coming, then he read:

"Tommy was born in Jamaica. His mother and father were slaves to a wine merchant who now lives in Liverpool. Tommy's father was a favorite with his master, who made him overseer because of his diligence, care and sobriety."

Johnny had trouble saying some of the words.

"Tommy was their only son, so they endeavored to get him made a scholar. Tommy was a fine boy and went to school every day without crying. He applied himself with such diligence that he could say the alphabet all the way through before he was three years old."

Johnny stopped reading to observe the effect on Boswell.

"Tommy sure was smart," was Boswell's only remark. Johnny went on:

"Above all he was taught to say his prayers every morning and evening. When he was five or six years old he could read any book through and beat all the white boys in the school. When Tommy had got to be twelve his master sent him on a voyage to sea in a brig *The Betsy*. He didn't like to leave his parents and when he was out of sight he wept bitterly. *The Betsy* was a fine ship and rode merrily along. Tommy was happy and had a good time with the crew.

Thus did they pass their time until they arrived in Liverpool on the 20th of March, 1713. When they had loaded their cargo again, they started back to Jamaica and arrived there about three months afterwards to the great joy of Tommy's parents. He was now a great favorite of his master."

Johnny read on slowly, pausing now and then, for there were many words that were hard to say. Then he came to the last sentence. He paused dramatically, and then read very slowly:

"Thus Tommy became the king!"

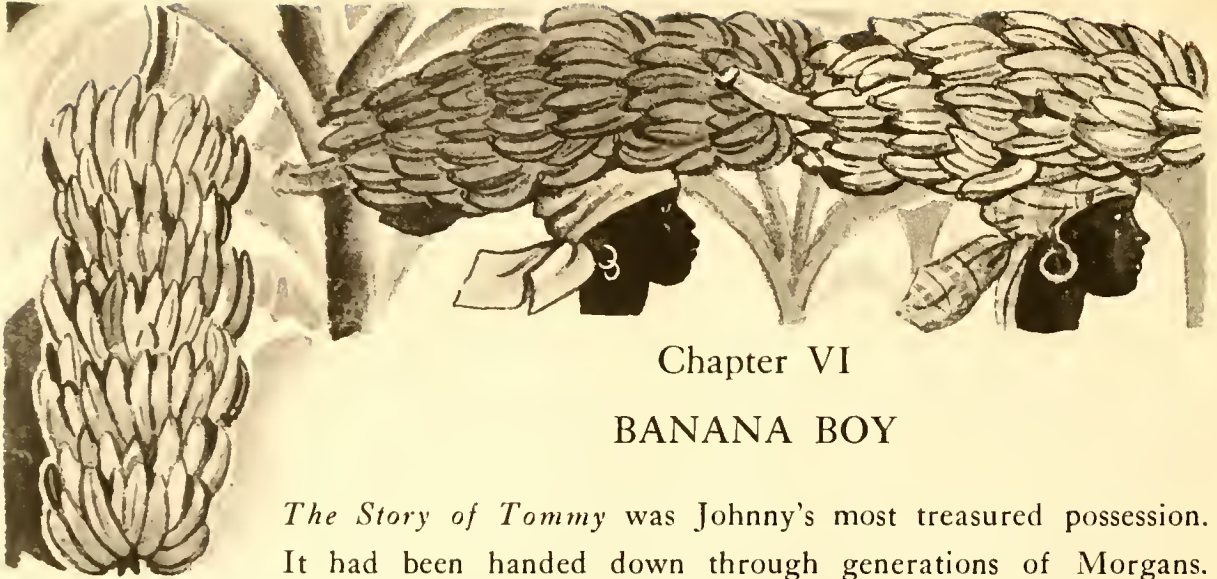
Boswell thought a moment. Then he said, "He certainly was smart. But do you think I could get to be a king?"

"Of course," said Johnny confidently. "But you've got to go to school first and work hard like Tommy did."

The next morning Boswell was enrolled in the class. Johnny Morgan's little book had planted the seeds of ambition.







## Chapter VI

### BANANA BOY

*The Story of Tommy* was Johnny's most treasured possession. It had been handed down through generations of Morgans. Now it belonged to him. The next two years at school he read the story many times. He made such rapid progress in school that he soon was at the head of his class. Miss Forkins was proud of him and encouraged him to continue his studies in one of the larger schools down on the plains. The little book still fired Johnny's ambition.

One morning as he was helping Uncle Solomon trim the dead leaves from the cocanut palms he told him of his plan. "I want to go to one of the schools down near the city. I have saved a little money and if you could get me a job on one of the plantations I could earn enough money for school. Don't you think there would be a job for me on the plantation where you work?"

The plantation where Uncle Solomon worked was one of many owned by a big fruit company. Hundreds of men, many with their families, lived on the plantations planting and caring for bananas. Many others worked in the company's

fields of sugar cane.

Uncle Solomon was proud of Johnny's ambition. "All right, Johnny. I'll speak to Mr. Clarkson tomorrow morning."

Two days later Johnny Morgan packed his few belongings in a bag, said goodbye to Aunt Milly and his pets, and started down the mountain with Uncle Solomon. He had arranged with his friend Boswell to look after his pets when Aunt Milly was away. He was to live with the Mallory Robinsons in one of the Company houses. All of the members of the Robinson family worked on the plantation. Johnny was to help the boys, Zeke and Zack, whose job was to pull weeds. Johnny also had to fetch drinking water from the stream. He filled a long section of bamboo plugged at one end and balanced it on his head like a giant stovepipe hat.

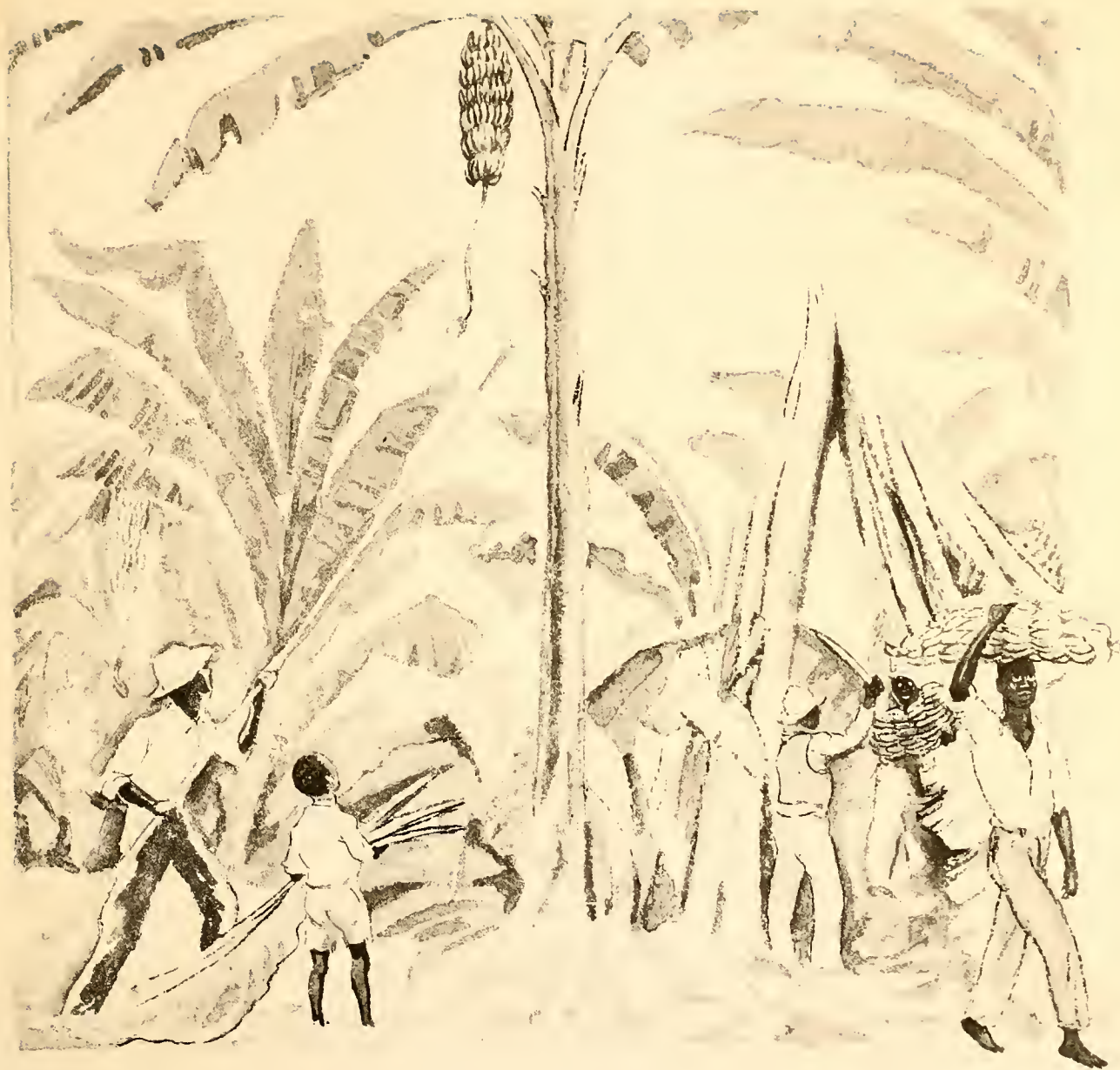
Johnny knew more about the care of bananas than most boys. Uncle Solomon had told him many things about his work on the big plantation. Now Johnny learned much more about growing bananas. Taking care of thousands of plants was very different from looking after the few palms at home. He watched the steam tractors plow up new fields. Then great steel plows were dragged back and forth between two engines. They cut the tough sod and turned it over as though it were butter. After a few days the rich black soil was again plowed, but this time they used teams of oxen instead of steam tractors. Johnny liked to watch the great oxen. Urged on by their drivers they pushed their whole weight against the yoke and pulled the heavy plow from one end of the field to the other.

The head man let Johnny help stake the new fields. Pieces of banana root called "bits" were brought from the older banana fields nearby. Each bit had to have at least one good eye. It reminded Johnny of potato planting. Johnny helped

look over the "bits" to see that the eyes were not bruised before they were placed in the hole with the eye toward the bottom and covered with earth. Johnny had helped Uncle Solomon plant a few trees on his own home farm but on the plantation they put hundreds of plants in the new fields. Uncle Solomon said that more than one hundred men worked all the time on this one farm. When they cut bananas they had to have many more workers and when they cut the sugar cane they had to have two or three hundred men working.

Johnny, Zeke and Zack went from field to field helping to weed the banana walks. Some of the plants only three months old were high above Johnny's head. Older plants were already beginning to blossom. In many of the fields great bunches of large green bananas were ready to cut. Johnny's keen eyes could tell at a glance when the bunch was ready for cutting.

One day the head man put the boys to work carrying big leaves cut from the plant to line the loading platforms. Uncle Solomon was cutting in the field where Johnny was working. Johnny watched in admiration as Uncle Solomon nicked the trunk of the tree with his long-handled knife. Uncle Solomon taught Johnny how and where to cut the trunk so that it would bend in just the right place. He showed Johnny how to steady the upper part of the tree with the long pole so that it would not fall too quickly and crush the bananas. Andy Wallace, the "backer," caught the bunch on his shoulders and Uncle Solomon with a swift movement of his machete cut it free from the tree. Another swift cut and the blossom end fell to the ground. Then Andy carried off the heavy bunch of green bananas to the waiting ox cart. Uncle Solomon trimmed off the best leaves. Johnny gathered them in his arms and followed Andy. The leaves made a thick pad on the bottom of the cart.



Every week a boat docked in the harbor to load bananas. Once at the end of the day's cutting Johnny asked the head man where all the bananas went to.

"Well, Johnny," said the head man. "The boats carry those green bananas to lands where bananas won't grow because of the cold. They hang them up in big rooms until they are almost ripe. Then they are taken to market and sold. The children there like them just as well as you do, Johnny."

Johnny thought the children of those far-away lands were very lucky to get sweet bananas from his beautiful island.

An Indian family lived next door to the Robinsons. Johnny often stopped to talk to them. He liked the children—Endira, the little girl who was ten, and Bochi, her brother of twelve. They had not been in Jamaica long. They were homesick for their beautiful village in the valley so far away across the water. They hoped sometime to return to their own home in India. Johnny listened to the tales of their far-away land. His eyes opened wide when they told him of elephants and other strange animals he had never seen.

Johnny read *The Story of Tommy* to his new friends. They thought it a very fine story too. Bochi thought he, too, would like to be a king.

Sometimes on Sunday Johnny made the long trip to his home on the mountain. Biddy barked a joyous welcome the moment he entered the yard. Coco brayed noisily and Katy the goat always came to him to be petted. Even Barney got to his feet and grunted when he saw Johnny. Aunt Milly never failed to make him sweet cakes when he came up the mountain. He always enjoyed the visits.

Johnny liked his new life on the big banana plantation. He missed Aunt Milly, his friends and his pets but his work kept him busy and interested. Johnny liked to cook and he often helped Mrs. Robinson cook the evening meal on the

little fireplace in back of the barracks. Mrs. Robinson was a good cook and she taught Johnny to make red-pea soup and "bambies." Johnny liked these round fried cakes made from grated casava and his mouth watered whenever he saw them browning on the iron.

In the evening Johnny often played cricket with Zeke and Zack and Bochi. Sometimes other boys joined them. All the children liked singing games and they often sat in a circle and played "Hardy, hardy" or "Girl from Annotto Bay." They passed small round stones from hand to hand as they sang in time to the music. Johnny thought it great fun, though he was often switched by the leader for not passing the stone in time. It was the rule of the game and the others were switched too.

Not all of the big plantation was given over to bananas. Hundreds of acres were planted in sugar cane. Johnny had seen the fields planted and watched the cane grow until now it waved high above the heads of the field workers. Much of the cane was ready for cutting and hundreds of new workers were busy in the fields. The cutters swung their long, sharp bladed knives and the tall green stalks fell into waiting hands or to the ground. Men and women workers carried the bundles of stalks to the waiting carts. Strong oxen pulled the heavily laden carts along the road to the sugar mill. Johnny and the other children enjoyed chewing a sweet juicy piece of sugar cane at the end of the day.

"Johnny, we are cutting cane tomorrow, and I want you to lead a string of oxen," said the overseer.

Johnny was pleased. He had never worked in the cane fields. Maybe now he would have a chance to see the great sugar mill. He hurried to the cattle pen

early the next morning. The driver was just getting the oxen hitched to the cart. Black Eyes and Tiger were the leaders followed by Ginger and Lion. Charley and Rome were the wheel oxen. Johnny's new job was to walk ahead with a lead rope and keep the oxen on the road.

When they arrived at the cane fields the cutters were already at work. Waiting men stacked the cane or loaded it into the carts. Sugar cane is heavy and the loads were large. Johnny walked ahead of the sweating, straining oxen.

One evening as he was coming home from work he met Bochi who was very excited. "Go down and look at the new cattle that have just come today, Johnny. They're beautiful. They brought them all the way from India."

Johnny hurried down the road. A short distance past the entrance to the overseer's home Johnny saw the cattle pen with ten sleek humpbacked Indian cattle standing in the center of it. They stood very still chewing their cud with slowly moving jaws. Johnny sat on the fence and watched them for a long time until the shadows deepened and the sun slipped behind the hills. He jumped off the fence and started for home. He looked back on the fields where so much of the cane had been cut that day. A dusty haze rose from some of the trash lying at the side of the field and when he stopped and looked closer he saw it was smoke. The first gentle puff of the evening breeze was blowing it across the field. Johnny ran to the fence and climbed into the cane field. By this time the wind had fanned the smoldering dry grass into a flame. It spread slowly. Johnny tried to stamp it out, but no sooner had he put it out in one place than it blazed up in another. He ran back to the road. There was no one in sight. He began to shout. "Fire in the cane! Fire in the cane! Hurry!" Just then Jim, one of the men, appeared. "Jim, there's a fire in the cane." Johnny raced back to the field.



Jim met the overseer returning from a tour of inspection. "Get all the men from the barracks, Jim," he said.

Mr. Clarkson put spurs to his horse and thundered toward the cane field in a cloud of dust. He tied his horse in the adjoining banana grove and ran into the cane field. Johnny was almost in tears by this time, for he could not keep the fire back. He had torn off his shirt and was using it to beat back the flames. He was almost exhausted. He had kept it from spreading toward the standing cane on the eastern side but it was slowly creeping north. More breeze and . . .

"Good work, Johnny. That's fine. You've saved the field. Lucky thing for us that breeze wasn't stronger."

Johnny was relieved to hear Mr. Clarkson's voice. Two truckloads of men arrived and soon had the fire out. Johnny slipped out of the field and walked slowly home. He was very tired and dropped off to sleep the moment his body touched his straw couch.

Johnny's prompt action had saved hundreds of acres of sugar cane. Mr. Clarkson decided that Johnny was not an ordinary boy.

One afternoon as they moved slowly along the main road near the overseer's cottage, a horse came racing toward them. A little girl was astride the horse and hanging on for dear life. The reins had slipped down the horse's neck and swung from side to side. It was a runaway. Quick as a flash Johnny leaped for the dangling reins as the horse galloped past. He caught them and held on tightly. His weight pulled the horse's head down and stopped him. Johnny was dragged along the road for a short distance and he was scratched and bruised. His quick action, however, had saved the little girl from getting hurt.

She slipped from the horse the moment it stopped. Her face was pale and



streaked with tears. "Oh thank you," she gasped. "Oh I hope you aren't hurt."

Johnny was too embarrassed to say anything.

Jo White, the driver of the oxen, came up. He looked at the scratches and bruises on Johnny's legs. "He's all right, Miss, he's just lost a little skin."

A tall young woman wearing glasses ran up. "Are you all right, Elizabeth? What happened? Your uncle said you were to ride in the yard."

"I'm all right, Miss Babson. Something frightened Brownie and he ran away with me." Elizabeth pointed to Johnny. "This little boy stopped him."

Miss Babson was relieved to find Elizabeth was unhurt. "That was very brave of you," she said to Johnny. "What is your name?"

"Johnny Morgan, ma'am."

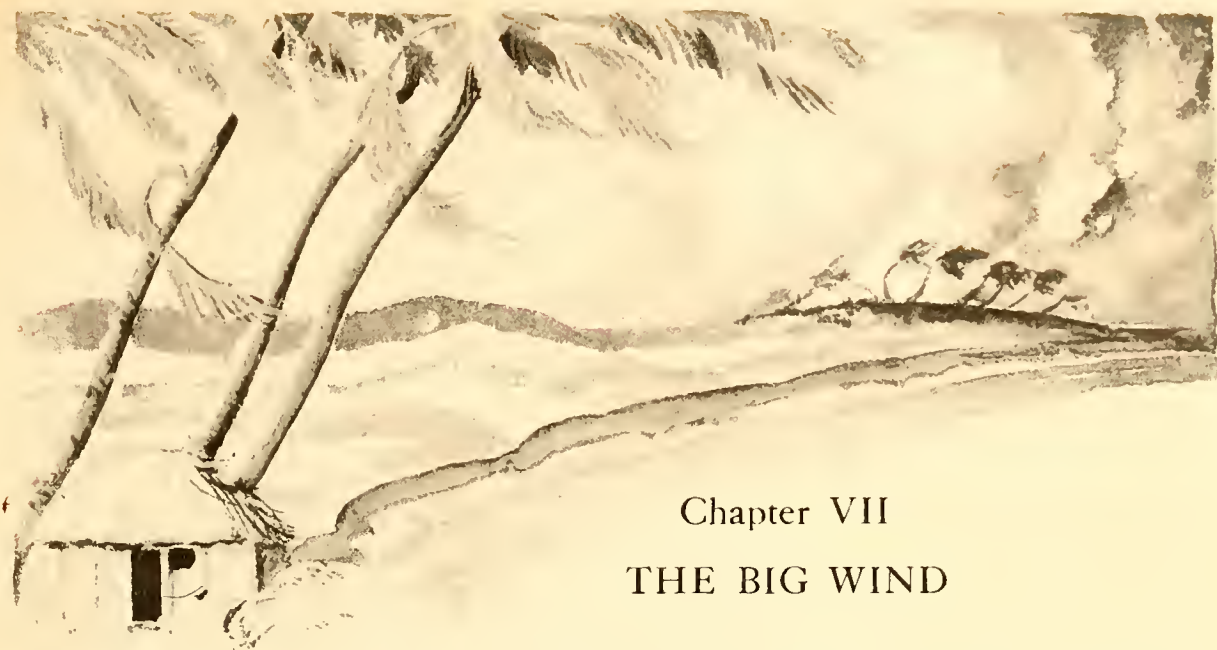
"Will you please take the horse to the stable?" said Miss Babson.

"Oh, yes, ma'am," said Johnny. He tied the horse to the rear of the cart.

"Get along, Tiger," sang out Jo White to the oxen. Johnny pulled on the lead rope. Elizabeth and Miss Babson walked with him. Johnny liked the friendly little girl. Soon he was telling them all about himself.

That evening Elizabeth told her family about Johnny Morgan. "He says that one of his great, great grandfathers was a king and——"

Her uncle laughed. "Yes, I know the boy. His uncle is Solomon O'Connor, the best cutter on the plantation. Johnny's mother was an O'Connor. Long before all the slaves were freed Old Michael O'Connor had freed his own on his plantation. That was a saying of his, 'Every O'Connor is a king.' His father was one of the Morgans. There is a whole village of Morgans down by Yallah. I have heard it said they claim to be descendants of the great sea rover. I'm going to have a talk with that boy Johnny. Maybe I can do something for him."



## Chapter VII

### THE BIG WIND

Johnny's talk with Mr. Clarkson made some important changes. Now he was to help in the kitchen, and do odd chores about the house instead of in the fields. Best of all Mr. Clarkson had arranged to have Miss Babson, the English governess, help Johnny with his lessons regularly. Johnny had told the overseer how much he wanted to go to school.

He was given a little room all to himself in the servants' quarters. He rose early every morning, dressed himself in the suit of white cotton which Mr. Clarkson had given him and reported to Zoe in the kitchen. He peeled the potatoes and other vegetables. He buried the kitchen waste in the compost heap. He made himself useful in many other ways until nine o'clock, when he went to the large room where the children had their lessons. Elizabeth and her brother Ernest helped him with his school work. At first he felt very shy, for although Miss

Babson and the children were friendly it was very hard for Johnny to feel completely at ease in the classroom.

Johnny learned that the children and their mother were visiting their uncle for the winter. They lived up north. Sometimes they told Johnny about the city in which they lived. Johnny shivered when he heard about the long cold winters, when snow covered the green earth and water froze so hard it could be walked on. Johnny didn't think he would want to live in such a place.

Johnny told Elizabeth and Ernest about his life up in the mountains, of his gourd carving and his pets. He showed them some of his rattles and when they admired them he gave them each one to keep. He also told them of the days when he was a very little boy and lived with his parents and Uncle Thaddeus down by the sea in the little fishing village called White Horses. That was where he learned to fish and swim. "Uncle Thaddeus knows all about the great pirate Henry Morgan," added Johnny.

"I like to fish," said Ernest. "Let's go to White Horses and fish."

"Yes, let's go," said Elizabeth. "Perhaps your uncle will tell us about pirates."

Ernest had a book about pirates at home. They did awful things, but she and Ernest liked to read about them. They ran to talk over their plans with Elizabeth's mother, who said they might go if Miss Babson went too. Uncle Ned said Edwards could drive them in the car. Edwards was a very good driver and they would be safe with him.

Saturday was a bright sunny day and they got an early start. Johnny said they could borrow some fishing lines from his uncle. They waved goodbye and drove swiftly past the rows and rows of bananas and the fields and fields of sugar cane. Johnny knew the shore road well. He pointed out places of interest to



Miss Babson and the children. Elizabeth wanted to stop and see some of the old forts but Ernest was eager to go on to White Horses. He wanted to have plenty of time for fishing and to hear about the pirates.

As they got nearer the shore they met many women with baskets of fish on their heads. Goats and donkeys grazing along the roadside scrambled up the bank and stared as Edwards tooted a warning horn. They passed thatched-roof cottages and Johnny waved to some of his friends. They stared back wide-eyed, surprised to see Johnny riding in such style.

Uncle Thaddeus lived just around the point, where the road dipped toward the water. At the next turn in the road they drove through a grove of palms that grew right down to the sea. There was a group of thatched houses close to the road.

"Here we are," said Johnny. Edwards stopped the car and the children and Miss Babson got out. Johnny looked inside the house. There was no one about.

"What do you want?" A sharp voice came from one of the cottages.

"Oh! It's Johnny Morgan. I didn't know you in those fine clothes." The voice was warm and friendly now.

"Hello, Aunt Sophia. I'm looking for Uncle Thaddeus. I have brought some visitors. They want to go fishing. Will he take us this morning?"

"You'll have to find him first. He's making a new dugout beyond those dunes." The old woman came out into the light and waved a skinny arm in the direction of the dune.

Johnny led the way and the others followed. They climbed to the top of the dune. Below them lay the beautiful white sandy beach. Johnny's uncle and several neighbors were putting the finishing touches on the new dugout boat which they had hollowed out from a large cotton tree. They looked up when Johnny

shouted, and stared curiously at the visitors. His uncle was surprised to see him and admired his new clothes. Everybody asked questions at once. Johnny told them that the children wanted to fish and so he had brought them to the best fishermen on the island. Uncle Thaddeus and the others looked pleased.

"Well, we can't stop now," said Uncle Thaddeus. "But we'll be finished in about an hour. Then we'll take you out." The chips flew as the men went to work again with hatchets and chisels.

Miss Babson had brought a book to read. She walked along the beach and sat down in the shelter of some dune grass while the children watched the workers.

"They had to bring that big cotton tree from way back in the hills," Johnny told them. "There are not many trees big enough around here. It takes a big tree to make a canoe."

"My, it's a lot of work to make a canoe like that!" said Ernest. "And it looks awfully heavy." He thought of the slender red canoe his father had promised to buy him the following summer. "I'd like to paddle one sometime. When will it be finished?" he asked Johnny.

"Maybe not for a long time," answered Johnny. "They can't work on it every day. They spend most of their time fishing and they work on the canoe when they're not too tired."

"Oh!" said Ernest. He seemed a little disappointed. He had hoped they were ready to float it.

The children walked down the beach to see what they could find. "Maybe the pirates buried some of their treasure around here," said Ernest hopefully.

"I don't think so," said Johnny. "Folks say that the pirates got so wicked over in Port Royal that God got madder and madder. They wouldn't listen to the

preachers he sent them so he dumped the whole city into the sea—gold and all. Uncle Thaddeus sometimes fishes outside the harbor. When he takes his catch to market he rows right over the place where the city is sunk. He says he can see the buildings down below. He always rows as fast as he can because some of the fishermen say the pirates are still carrying on down there.”

“Gee, I’d like to see them walking around!” said Ernest.

“I’d like to see their chests of jewels and pieces of eight,” said Elizabeth. They were always singing songs about pieces of eight. Johnny, what are they?

“I don’t know,” said Johnny.

“Pieces of eight are old Spanish coins,” Ernest informed her.

In the shallow pools in the rocky ledge that rose a foot above the sea they searched for crabs and sea urchins. Miss Babson watched them for a time. They seemed to be enjoying themselves, so she went back to her reading.

“Come here, Johnny!” Uncle Thaddeus called from the dune above the beach.

“I’ll be right back,” said Johnny as he hastened off to see what his uncle wanted.

A small dug out was pulled up on the beach, close to where Elizabeth and Ernest stood. “Oh, here’s a little boat,” said Elizabeth. “Let’s paddle out there,” she pointed to the reefs about fifty yards from the shore. The water between was as calm as a lake.

“All right,” Ernest quickly responded.

They climbed into it and paddled with their hands. The boat rocked a little.

“Gee,” said Ernest, “she rides just like a canoe. Where’s the paddles?” There were no paddles. “Oh, well, we can paddle with our hands. It isn’t far.”

Slowly the canoe moved through the water. It wasn’t long before the prow hit the reef. Elizabeth got her feet wet climbing out. Then she held the boat



while Ernest got out. They pulled the boat up on a flat rock and started off to search for hidden treasure.

Johnny and his uncle had disappeared over the dune. Near Thaddeus Morgan's hut a group of fishermen were listening to Aunt Sophia. Edwards had parked the car just off the road. He sat in the car listening to the talk.

"I tell you I feel it in my bones," she was saying. "When my left knee twitches and my arm aches that means a storm. When both my knees and both my arms ache that's a bad storm, and when I ache and shake all over then it's time to pray. There's a hurricane coming as sure as I'm born."

The fishermen talked over the old woman's warnings.

"Too early for a big wind," said one. "She's only got rheumatics."

"I don't know," ventured another. "She is right most of the time."

"It doesn't look right to me," said another.

All eyes looked toward the sea. Dark clouds had gathered on the horizon.

"Well, that's that. Aunt Sophia is as right as rain. I'm glad we haven't started fishing . . . Um . . . That looks bad."

"There's no telling just where it might strike," said Uncle Thaddeus. "Maybe if you hurry, Edwards can drive you home before it gets too bad. We'll take you fishing another time."

Johnny was out of earshot before Uncle Thaddeus had finished speaking. He climbed the sand dune and looked hurriedly about. His curly hair almost stood on end. There were Elizabeth and Ernest way out on the reef hunting for shells, and floating about, out of reach, was the canoe. The children had been having such a wonderful time they didn't notice that the waves were getting bigger, nor did they have any thought of the peril they were in. Johnny's legs never moved



so fast before. He tore down the beach.

"Miss Babson, Miss Babson!" he shouted. "Get Uncle Thaddeus quick."

The startled governess looked up. She saw the children out on the reef, and the rough seas about them. She turned pale as she ran panting up to the cottage. "Quick, quick!" she gasped. "The children!"

The fishermen could not understand a word, but one glance at her agitated face told them that "the old devil wind was already up to his tricks," and they all ran after her. From the top of the dunes they saw what had happened.

Elizabeth was the first to notice that something was wrong. The wind that blew her hair and dress was too cool for comfort. She looked at the sea. The smooth water had become rough. The blue had changed to gray and the canoe was gone! Ernest's interest in his shells vanished when he saw the drifting boat and the ruffled sea. They were in a fix. Neither of them could swim. The sky grew darker and darker. Waves whipped against the rocky reef.

Now they were really frightened. Elizabeth bit her lip to keep from crying. Why had she suggested coming out to the reef? Just then they saw Johnny racing along the shore. He plunged into the water. This was the very place where he had learned to swim. His strong arms pulled him through the rough sea. Hand over hand, now under, now over the water, just like a porpoise, Johnny made his way toward the drifting boat. Ernest and Elizabeth were huddled together.

Johnny reached the boat. He swung it around and headed it toward the rock, pushing it from behind. His legs churned the water into foam. It was hard work against both wind and waves and he gasped with relief when the prow grated against the rock. Johnny steadied the boat while Elizabeth and Ernest climbed in.





Johnny was tired but he knew there was no time to lose. He had hoped the men would get out to them in their boat, but there was no sign of them yet. The wind and waves shoved the boat rapidly toward shore and Johnny tried to keep it steady as he pushed with one hand and swam alongside with the other. Uncle Thaddeus and some of the men waded out through the breakers and caught the boat as it came swiftly toward the beach. Altogether they shoved it ashore, and helped the children onto the sand. Behind them the ocean roared. Miss Babson wept with relief when the children stepped out of the boat.

"Run! Run!" shouted Uncle Thaddeus and they all ran breathless over the sand to Uncle Thaddeus' house. Edwards moved the car away from the trees and ran inside, too. The one little door was quickly shut and bolted. Outside the tall palms groaned and bent in the wind. The gale turned into a fury and the little cottage trembled. The children looked out of the window. Some of the cottages down by the water's edge were blown flat. One rested on its side against a palm. The next minute the palm was blown down and the cottage rolled over and over down the beach like a giant ball. Then it fell apart. Fortunately no one was in it.

Now it was raining hard too. It seemed as if the sea had swallowed them.

The little Americans were terrified. Never had they seen anything like this. Some of the older folks were kneeling and praying to God to calm the wind and drive away the storm. Even Miss Babson and Edwards looked scared. Johnny was frightened too.

Suddenly the howling ceased. All was quiet outside. Johnny peeked out. The sky was getting lighter. He saw a spot of blue in the gray clouds overhead. A ray of sun streaked down from the heavens. Uncle Thaddeus opened the door and they all hurried out.

Outside the air was sweet and fresh. The storm had lasted but a short time. In that short time houses had been blown down and trees uprooted. On all sides was ruin left by the wind. Miss Babson thought they should hurry home. The children's mother and uncle would be worried over their safety. Edwards thought they could get through. He, too, was anxious to start immediately for he knew that the dry river beds they had crossed coming to White Horses would soon be raging swollen streams. They bade their friends a hasty goodbye and drove off.

All along the road they saw fallen trees. Edwards knew that he must waste no time. He drove fast but carefully and kept a sharp lookout for trees in the road. All the dry river beds they had seen driving down were now raging torrents of water. They drove slowly over every bridge. Many bridges had already given way behind them. Everyone warned them of washouts in the road ahead. When they reached the city, Edwards stopped and Miss Babson telephoned to say they were safe. The plantation had felt the wrath of the hurricane but in the city there was no serious damage. Just a few tin roofs blown off and a few trees down. Johnny wondered about the little farm on the mountain and hoped that Uncle Solomon and Aunt Milly were safe.

It was late when they arrived home. The children's mother welcomed them with open arms. She had been very worried over them during the storm. After they had changed to dry clothing Zoe the cook brought in hot lemonade. Elizabeth and Ernest told how Johnny had rescued them.

"We would have been washed right off the rocks by the big waves if Johnny hadn't saved us," said Elizabeth.

"Yes," said Ernest, "I certainly was happy when Johnny shoved the boat back to our rock. I'm going to learn to swim right away."

"Me too," said Elizabeth.

"He really was very brave," put in Miss Babson. "He didn't hesitate an instant. He plunged right into the water and swam for the boat. I thought they would all be drowned."

Johnny was embarrassed by the praise heaped upon him.

Short though the storm was, it had raised havoc on the banana plantation. Trees had been uprooted and tossed about like blades of grass. Tall banana palms, weighted down by great bunches of bananas, had snapped under the furious onslaught of the big wind. Fortunately the weekly cutting had been finished just before the storm broke. Carloads of jade green bananas waited at the dock for the company boat, due the next day.

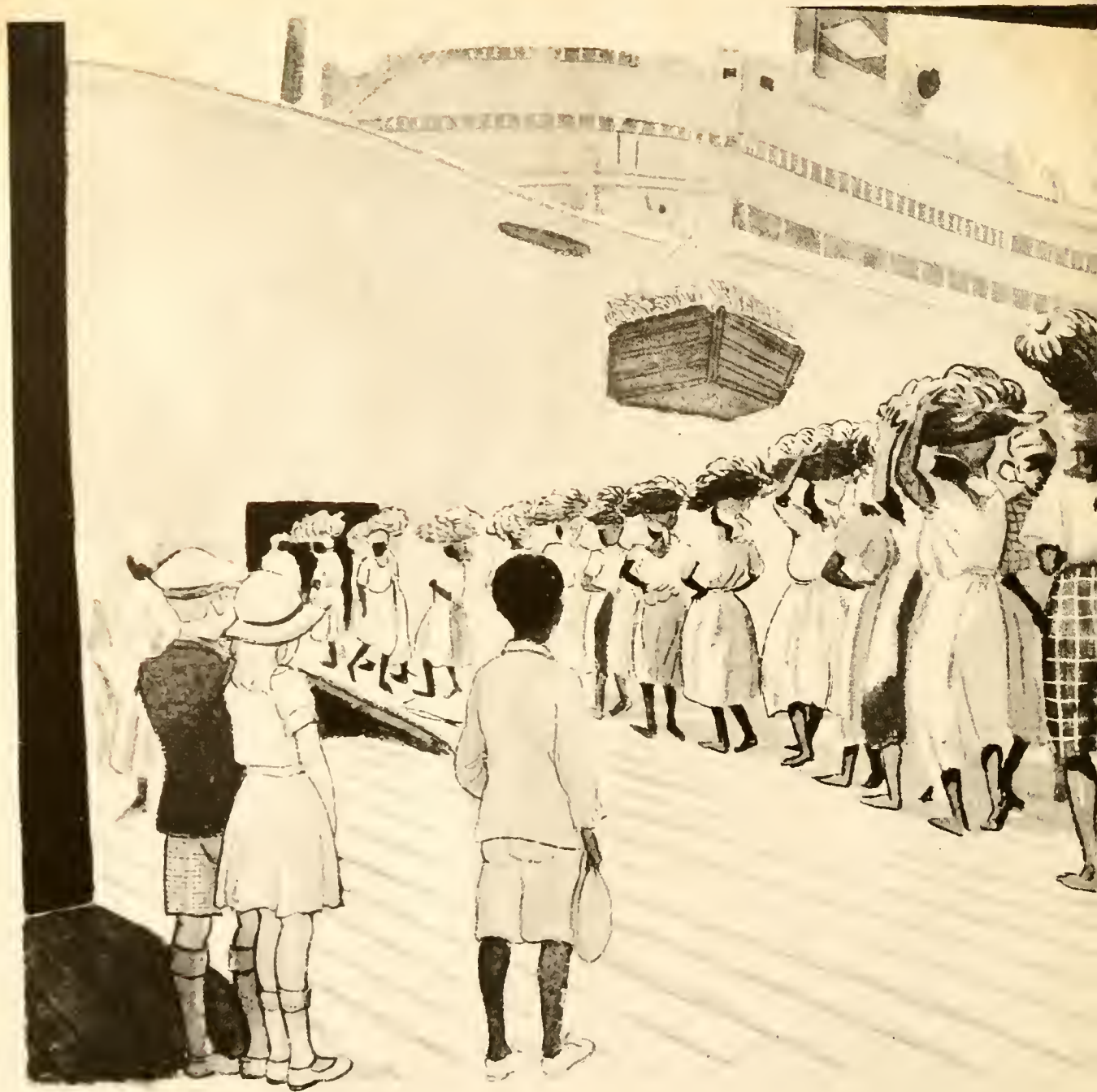
Mr. Clarkson's task was to clear away the fallen trees and replant the ruined fields as soon as possible. Though he had little hope that any bananas would be saved, he gave orders to his men, "Cut all bunches that are not bruised and take them to the loading stations." The cutters hurried to their tasks. Johnny helped them carry bundles of banana leaves to pad the waiting ox carts. By the light of great flares the men worked all night cleaning up the damage wrought by the storm.

Mr. Clarkson had learned from experience that there is storm as well as sunshine in the life of a banana planter. He worked with the men and, much to the surprise of everyone, many bunches of bananas were saved. The next morning he was tired but in a cheerful mood. He went into the children's classroom.

"How would you like to see the loading?" he asked Elizabeth and Ernest.

"I want to go," said Elizabeth and Ernest all at once.

"All right," said Mr. Clarkson. He turned to Johnny. "From all I hear, you are a champion lifesaver. I think I shall have to look around for a medal for





you." He smiled. "Have you ever seen a loading, Johnny?"

"No, sir," answered Johnny.

"Well, you come along, too," said Mr. Clarkson.

On the way to the dock they drove through acres and acres of ruined banana fields. The children were so excited at seeing the big white boat, they almost forgot that they had come down to see the loading.

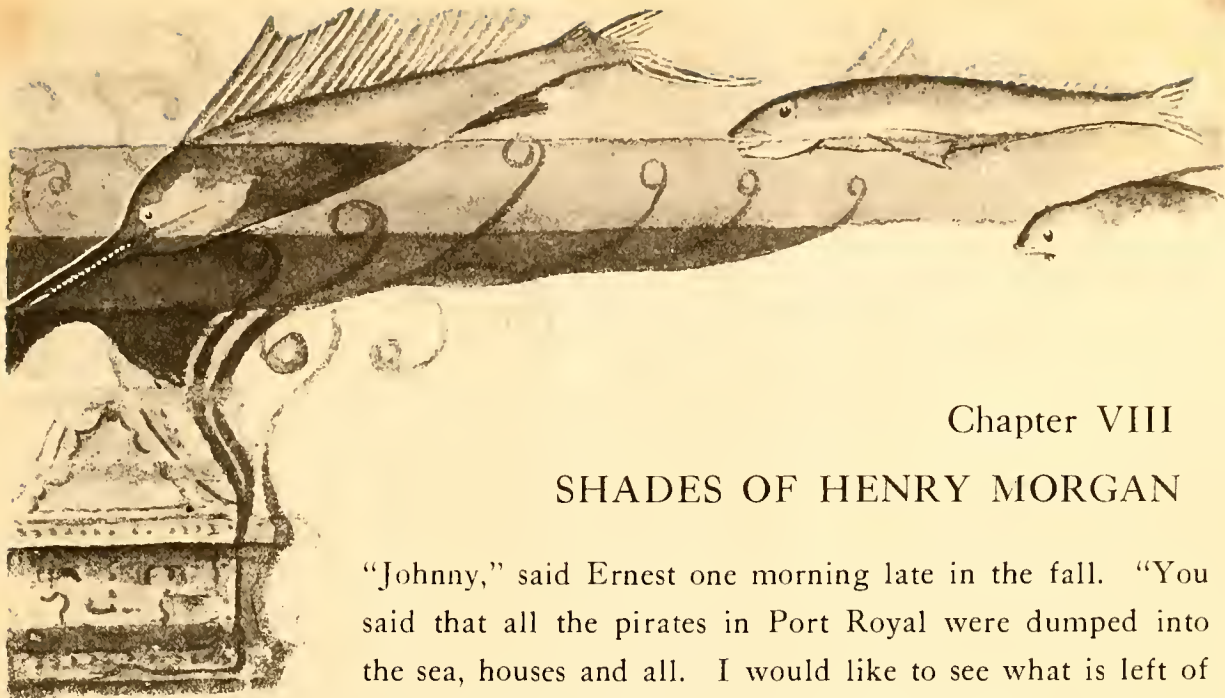
"That's the boat we came down here on," said Elizabeth.

"No, it isn't," said Ernest. "But we came down on one just like it."

The argument ended when Edwards moved the car out of the path of a puffing engine. There was a long string of cars and every car was bursting with green bananas. The children stared wide-eyed. Men in the cars lifted the great bunches of fruit out to men and women who carried them on their heads across the dock and then disappeared into openings in the side of the ship. Others carried their loads to great baskets which were swung high in the air over the side of this ship and dropped far down into the hold. It was a never-ending line.

Mr. Clarkson watched the workers for some time. Then he turned to his sister. "Everything is going nicely. By evening the loading will be finished. I think we have been very lucky. Sometimes a storm ruins the entire crop. We had better get back home now."

It took days and days to put the plantation in order again. All the trash in the roads and the fields had to be cleared away. New plants had to be put in to replace those destroyed by the storm. Everyone had to work and Johnny helped the men. As soon as the extra work was finished he went back to his other tasks in the kitchen and lessons started again. Johnny was glad to go to school now. It seemed a long time ago that he ran away from Mr. Smalley.



## Chapter VIII

### SHADES OF HENRY MORGAN

"Johnny," said Ernest one morning late in the fall. "You said that all the pirates in Port Royal were dumped into the sea, houses and all. I would like to see what is left of Port Royal. Maybe we could find Morgan's grave. He is buried there. Do you think you could find the place?"

"I don't know Port Royal very well," said Johnny, but my father's cousin Mary Ann Morgan lives there and I could ask her."

"Oh, I want to go along," said Elizabeth. "Maybe we could find some pieces of eight."

The children's mother wanted to see Port Royal, too, so the following Sunday Mr. Clarkson arranged for a launch to take Mrs. Gray, Elizabeth, Ernest, Miss Babson and Johnny across the bay to Port Royal.

The chugging launch cut smoothly through the blue water. When they were well out in the harbor, Johnny tried to see his home on the mountainside. He

could make out the garrison at Newcastle but his own tiny cottage was lost in the green jungle growth. Gulls dipped into the sea in search of food, or drifted on the air currents with widespread wings. Great white pelicans splashed into the water from the overhanging boughs of the seagrape tree along the shore of the Palisadoes.

"Here we are now. Look!" exclaimed Johnny. The launch was in the narrow strait between the harbor and Green Bay. "Here's where the pirates were dumped into the sea. We are right above the sunken part of Port Royal."

"Shucks!" said Ernest. "The water is too choppy to see anything. If the water were smooth we might see the pirates' houses."

The chugging of the launch stopped as the captain drew slowly alongside a small dock and tied fast. Nearby, close to the water's edge, stood a row of small wooden houses. A dozen or more children were swimming in the shallow water. They stared at Johnny and the other visitors on the launch. The captain of the launch helped his passengers ashore. "I'll wait here until you are ready to leave ma'am," he said to Mrs. Gray.

Johnny led the way through the narrow streets. Mary Ann Morgan lived in Port Royal but he did not know just where. He would ask at one of the small gabled houses. Johnny knocked on the door of the nearest house. A very wrinkled old woman came to the door. A bright plaid cloth was tied around her head. She looked at Johnny. "Good morning, Auntie," said Johnny. "Does Mary Ann Morgan live here?"

"Not Mary Morgan, but Henry Morgan used to live here," said the old woman.

"Not Henry Morgan the pirate?" exclaimed Ernest.

"No, Henry Morgan was a fisherman and he moved over to Alligator Bay."



The old woman looked at Ernest and lowered her voice. "If you are interested in pirates there's pirates all round you."

Elizabeth and Ernest looked but couldn't see a trace of a pirate. Mrs. Gray and Miss Babson looked a little startled.

"Some folks don't believe it," continued the old woman, "but when the moon is full, the pirates come up from out there." She pointed a thin finger in the direction of the sunken city. "Just last moon they walked right past this house. They woke me up with their singing and shouting. When I looked out the window they had turned the corner. I heard them knocking at the door of the inn. It was rum they wanted. Then they stomped up the stairs of the government house to hold court. When they came back I heard the clanking of chains. I was afraid to look out for I knew they were taking someone to the gallows. When the moon is full I never sleep well." The old woman shook her head and closed the door.

The pirate hunters walked through the narrow streets of Port Royal. The place was deserted. Now and then a shy child would pop out of a doorway, stare at the strangers and pop back again. Johnny led the way to the big square. It was Sunday morning and the voices of the congregation rose in song from the old church at the far end. They retraced their steps.

Johnny looked at the old government house as they passed. The outside stairs looked very rickety. He thought of the old woman's story. If the pirates stomped up and down those stairs very often they would soon fall down.

He led his friends back to the dock where they boarded the launch. Once again they passed over the sunken city. Ernest leaned over the side of the launch and stared down into the water. He still hoped he might hear the tolling of the church bells under the sea or catch a glimpse of sunken treasure. Johnny



looked toward the mountains and his little farm. The pirates were welcome to their sunken city as far as he was concerned. Edwards was waiting at the dock to drive them home.

Soon it was time for Elizabeth and Ernest and their mother and Miss Babson to return to their home in the big city in the north. Johnny smiled and waved his hand when their boat pulled away from the dock but his heart was heavy. He had enjoyed being a guide to them and their going made him sad—first he would miss their friendship, and then his lessons. He hadn't saved much money. He would have to give up the idea of going to school for awhile. He read his little book often for he never forgot that Tommy got ahead by working hard at his books.

Months passed. Johnny was never idle.

Then one day Mr. Clarkson called Johnny into his office. He held an envelope in his hand. "Tomorrow is Christmas Day, Johnny, and sometimes very nice things happen to deserving boys and girls. Elizabeth and Ernest have not forgotten you. They are sending you a Christmas present that I am sure will please you. It is a scholarship in the parish school, and this means that you can have a good education. You start school after the holidays."

Johnny stared at Mr. Clarkson, speechless. He took the envelope from Mr. Clarkson's hands. At last he stammered words of thanks and ran to his room. Johnny gazed at the envelope in his hands. The papers inside meant that he, Johnny Morgan, a little Jamaican from the "bush" could go to a fine school. He pinched himself to make sure he wasn't dreaming. Then he put the precious envelope between the pages of the little red book. Johnny Morgan's legacy was more than a little book. It was a stepping stone to good fortune.



# MACMILLAN BOOKS

*By Berta and Elmer Hader*

Midget and Bridget

Spunky

The Farmer in the Dell

The Picture Book of Travel

The Wonderful Locomotive

(text by Cornelia Meigs)

Seven "Happy Hour Books"

The Ugly Duckling

Hansel and Gretel

The Little Red Hen

The Crooked Sixpence

Chicken Little

The Three Bears

Wee Willie Winkie



